

# THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

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A. LINCOLN SHUTE

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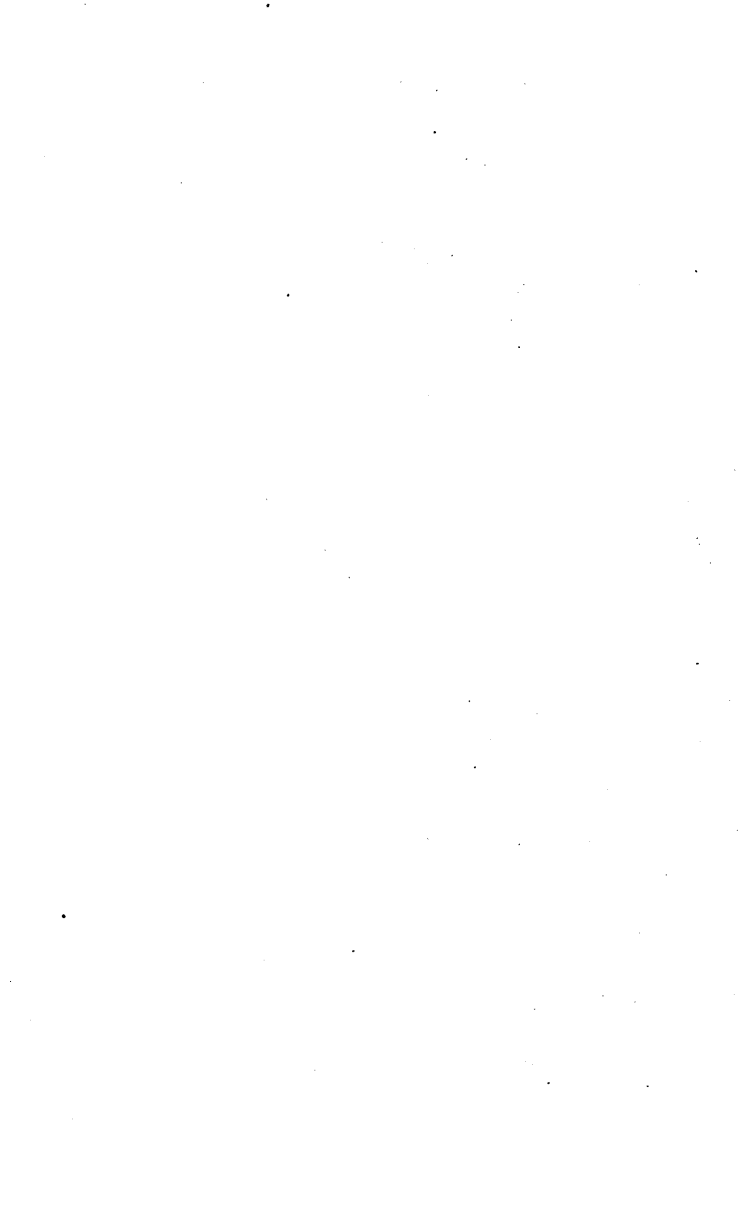
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# THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

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## INTRODUCTION

By  
Bishop STEPHEN M. MERRILL, D.D., LL.D.



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To My Mother  
Whose Anxious and Persistent  
Prayers for the Salvation of Her Boy  
Led Me in Early Life  
To Desire and Seek  
To Become a Child of God  
And by Whose Sacrifices Largely  
I was Prepared for the Christian Ministry  
This My First Book  
Is Dedicated  
On Her Seventy-fifth  
Birthday, April 21, 1904

"It affords me great pleasure to say that I have read with much interest the manuscript of the book of Rev. A. Lincoln Shute, B.D., on *The Fatherhood of God*.

"I regard it as a book prepared with great care, clear in style, full in its treatment, and eminently satisfactory. The book shows profound study of the literature on the subject and an acquaintance with the issues involved, and I am confident that its circulation will do much good in spreading the truth on this most important topic of Christian thought.

"I cordially commend it as worthy of study on the part of our preachers and people."—*Henry A. Buttz, D.D., LL.D., President of Drew Theological Seminary.*



## PREFACE

---

“THE Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man,” is a phrase very popular, widely used and much abused. It is employed constantly in whole or in part by very many writers and speakers, who seem to take it for granted that it has a very definite and fully established meaning: namely, that all men are brothers because God is their universal Father. Very few have attempted to formulate an exact doctrine of the subject; and still fewer have done this by a full and fair examination of what the Bible has to say about it.

In 1864 Dr. Robert S. Candlish delivered the Cunningham Lectures before the New College, Edinburgh, on “The Fatherhood of God,” maintaining that

the relationship has reference only to those who have been born again, born of God. These lectures form the most satisfactory treatment of the subject that has yet appeared, but contain a fatal defect, due to his system of theology, or at least to his understanding of that system. In 1866 Professor Thomas J. Crawford, D.D., of the University of Edinburgh, published a reply to Dr. Candlish, aiming "to illustrate the Divine Fatherhood, at once in its general reference to all mankind and in its special reference to" believers. Besides these, and with the exception of a work by Charles H. H. Wright in 1867, and a more recent little book by John C. Adams, a Universalist, the writer knows of no book on the subject which attempts a full exposition of the teaching of Scripture on the Divine Fatherhood. Many books on other themes, and some on this, contain some Scriptural references to the subject or an exposition of a few relevant or irrelevant

passages of the Word, various lines of argument, and much assumption concerning it, but no thorough attempt to set forth and establish the Biblical doctrine of the Fatherhood.

The importance of such a study is seen in the fact that the notion that God is a universal Father is of such far-reaching influence that the Universalist takes it for his fundamental doctrine, an Oxford theologian and lecturer in American universities makes it "the determinative principle" of theology, and a recent author, in an attempt to disprove Dr. Henry van Dyke's characterization of the present as "An Age of Doubt," proposes that "all theories about God, man, and the universe should be interpreted" in its light. And yet only the first of these attempts to establish his fundamental principle by an examination of both sides of the Scriptural argument on the teaching in question. It would seem to be time that this doctrine should be held up to view in the

light of the whole Bible, in order that its own truth or falsity may be determined, that we may be prepared the better to weigh the value of the conclusions drawn from the assumed truth of the premise of the universal Fatherhood as the fundamental, determinative, interpreting principle. It is possible that such a course would lead to the discovery that a most precious truth of our faith is being misinterpreted and misapplied, so that its real value is lost, and that which should be a source of comfort and inspiration is being turned into an instrument of evil.

Since writing the body of this work and the foregoing part of this Preface, two books, very recently published, have come to our attention. The one is *The Fatherhood of God in Christian Truth and Life*, by J. Scott Lidgett, M.A., Edinburgh. One-third of this large book of over four hundred pages is devoted to a Scripture interpretation of the doctrine, one-third to the doctrine in Church his-

tory, and the remainder to the significance of the Divine Fatherhood. This book goes to the press too soon for the writer to make an extended examination of Mr. Lidgett's work. This much, however, is evident, that he makes the same vital mistake made by all advocates of the universal Divine Fatherhood: namely, the failure to discern that the Scriptures ground the Divine family relationship not in creation but in redemption. This defect vitiates much of his Scripture interpretation and leads him also to miss the mark in some parts at least of his historical review. Every argument of fundamental importance in this new work has been anticipated in the following pages, so as to make further comment unnecessary.

The other book, *The New and Living Way*, by Dr. M. S. Terry, makes reference to this subject only in a footnote closing with this sentence: "So one may say after the manner of Paul in 1 Tim-

othy 4: 10, that God is the Father of all men, especially of them that believe." First Timothy 4: 10 reads, "We have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of them that believe." Every evangelical Christian knows the meaning of Paul's words: namely, that Christ is not actually but potentially the Savior of all men, and that this potential Savior becomes the actual Savior of any particular adult individual only on condition of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The same thing, as Dr. Terry suggests, is true concerning God's Fatherhood, which is exactly coextensive with the Saviorhood of Christ. This doctrine is developed fully from Scripture in the following study.

The author desires to express his gratitude to Bishop Stephen M. Merrill and President Henry A. Buttz for their kindly encouragement after reading the manuscript. The Bishop has made many val-

uable suggestions, besides writing the Introduction.

The purpose of the writer has not been to furnish an example of elegant writing as a model for the college class room, though he has aimed persistently at one rhetorical requirement, perspicuity.

This book is the outgrowth of a profound conviction that some one, without further delay, ought to place within reach of the Church universal a full, plain, warm-hearted, logical, Scriptural, and evangelically Christian presentation of the glorious doctrine of the Fatherhood of God. Whether the author has accomplished this, must be left to a friendly Church to judge. He claims only that such was his ideal, prayerful, and painstaking purpose.

*A. Lincoln Shute.*

Chicago, April 21, 1904.





## INTRODUCTION

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THE subject of this Treatise, always interesting, has assumed special importance in recent years because of the use made of it by a certain class of so-called liberal theologians, as well as by many who do not pretend to be students of the Holy Word. The two phrases—the Fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of man—have become linked together in such way that one always suggests the other, and each appears to be the complement of the other. The brotherhood of man is supposed to result from the Fatherhood of God. The idea is that inasmuch as God created all men, and created them of one blood, they are all brothers, and all children of a common Father. This is the ordinary thought which underlies the popular use of this language—a

thought which is not unnatural, and which is often used without any suspicion of its heretical bearing, or that it has any tendency to lead to unsound or unscriptural conceptions of God, or of His relation to the human race. It does, however, have this tendency, and it is often used purposely by opposers of what is known as orthodoxy, to build up theories or doctrines antagonistic to the faith of all evangelical Churches.

The process of argumentation is short and taking. Assuming that the relation of children is properly predicated of the act of creation, the conclusion is easily reached that all whom God created are His children, and children because He created them, and that they can no more cease to be His children than they can cease to be His creatures. The absurdity of identifying all creatures with the children of God does not appear without a little effort of the mind to distinguish between things that differ.

The author of this Treatise has discovered the difference, and seen clearly that the foundation of the family relation is redemption and not creation, and forcefully points out that the opposite view is Universalism, whether the holder intends it or not. It is against this false conception and erroneous use of a most precious doctrine that he makes solemn protest in this volume, and the reader will be impressed that he protests with good reason, and with arguments that cannot be gainsaid or turned aside as without weight.

Some months ago the author read an Essay on this subject before the Methodist Ministers' Meeting in Chicago, which awakened considerable interest, and, much to the surprise of the writer of this introductory note, it was severely criticised by preachers who are not supposed to entertain loose notions on the fundamentals of Christianity. This writer took occasion to indorse the Essay, and after the meeting was over felt moved to

commend it in conversation with its author, and suggested to him the idea of enlarging it so as to give it to the public in the form of a small volume for general circulation. It is not unlikely that it was in pursuit of this suggestion that our good brother has prepared the work now submitted to the public. Having made this suggestion, and having examined the manuscript before it was passed to the publishers, I do not hesitate to assume a share of responsibility for the appearance of the book. So far as its teaching is concerned, it seems to me that neither a Methodist nor any other orthodox or evangelical minister or layman can dissent with any consistency.

It recognizes the supreme fact that God is the creator of all things, and the additional fact that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth. It accords to man his high place and dignity in the order of creation, his rightful claim to sonship in the Divine

family based on the possession of the moral image of his Maker so long as he retained it, and recognizes his moral freedom to the extent of having power to forfeit by disobedience the Divine likeness and his exalted relationship. Upon the fact of his possessing this power of forfeiture turns issues of momentous import. If he did not possess it, and did not, in fact, forfeit the Divine image and lose his relation to God as a child, there can be no distinct meaning in the allegation that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son, nor any worthy reason for his incarnation or mission in this world as the Redeemer and Savior of men. The whole scheme of Redemption hinges on this great forfeiture by sin. On it also depends the necessity of whatever is included in the Scriptural doctrines of reconciliation, regeneration, and adoption. If there is reality in the processes described by these terms, there is reality in the forfeiture and the recovery. God does not reconcile

the unalienated. He does not regenerate those who have never become unregenerate. He does not adopt His own children, those of His own household. If these words have any meaning, they have meaning of most tremendous significance. They mean all that our Author attributes to them, and more than can possibly belong to them if the hypothesis of the universal Fatherhood be true.

The universality of God's love is not set aside by the ground taken in this work. He loved all men, not because they were by creation His children, but His love reached out to them in their alienation while they were not His children, and was so deep that it sought to make them His children by adoption and grace. By denying the power of forfeiture of the filial relation, we deny the richest quality in the love of God, as well as the true significance of redemption, and all that is vital in the processes of gospel salvation.

First of all, God is the Father of our

Lord Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son; and then He is the Father of all that receive His Son, and secure a spiritual union with Him. These are His children not through Adam, but through Jesus Christ. They become children not by being created in Adam, but by being created anew in Jesus Christ; not by being born, but by being born again; not by being born of flesh, but by being born of the Spirit; not by generation, but by regeneration. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." They become God's children by being born of God. This is plain, Scriptural, true, and in harmony with the whole system of redemption.

In these days of rapid and superficial thinking along lines of the greatest importance, when Scriptural terms and phrases are being flippantly used to un-

dermine the foundations of evangelical faith, it is refreshing to find a younger minister of progressive spirit and studious habits, grasping the essence of the gospel and applying it courageously in the exposure of popular error. An occasional want in rhetorical dress is not to be accounted serious when found in connection with sound interpretation and logical force vigorously employed in "driving away erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's Word." Let the book be read with an eye to the truth it contains, and with a heart open to edification in the deep things of God, and the chief design of the author will be accomplished in the establishment of rational and Scriptural views of the "Fatherhood of God."

*S. M. Merrill*



## BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE SUBJECT

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NOTE.—All references in the text to the following works are made by number; for example, (1: 137) means, *Can I Believe in God the Father?*—William Newton Clarke. Page 137. A superior figure refers to the column. Scriptural quotations are taken from the Revised Version, American Standard Edition, or what might be called more briefly, the American Standard Version.

### A.—BOOKS TEACHING THE UNIVERSAL FATHERHOOD

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4. *Universalism.*—Nye.

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6. Science and Health.—Mrs. Eddy.
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14. The Teaching of Jesus. Vol. II.—Wendt.
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TIONAL SPIRITUAL FATHERHOOD

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- 37. Systematic Theology. Vol. II.—Miley.

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# THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD





# THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

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## *Occasion and Purpose of This Book*

THE beloved disciple John, seeking to give expression to the highest manifestation of the Divine love, <sup>A fundamental and cherished doctrine</sup> exclaims: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God" (1 Jno. 3: 1). Paul finds the chief privilege of Christians in this, that they are no longer servants, but sons, having "received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. 8: 15; Gal. 4: 6). And when Jesus would have His disciples realize the most blessed relationship of earth or heaven,

He taught them the use of the name most frequently on His own lips, that they might say, "Our Father" (Matt. 6: 9). How unlike the generally prevalent conception of God as the Unknown and Unknowable, or the stern and hateful Despot, is this Christian view of God as a Father! Truly, one of the most fundamental and greatly to be cherished doctrines of our faith is that of the Fatherhood of God.

But the more we appreciate this fact, and the more firmly we hold to this doctrine, the greater grows the regret that the thought of the Divine Fatherhood has become involved with the gravest dangers. In the revolt from an unworthy conception of Deity, the commendable effort to come to a truer and really Christian view of God, has carried many of its promoters to the opposite extreme—to a view of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man which is fundamentally false and whose "tend-

Grave dangers

ency," says Bishop Merrill, "is evil, and only evil. It strikes at the foundation of the Gospel by building up a false notion of the Divine family and removing the necessity of the new birth" (19: 150). This doctrine is called "The Universal Fatherhood of God," and rests upon the assumption that all men are by nature through their first or physical birth children of God.

The true view, we think, will be found to be, that the filial relationship of man to God is not physical, but spir-  
itual; not grounded in nature,

The true view

but in grace, not in creation, but in redemption; that, for man to be a son of God, he must be born again, born of God; and that, therefore, the Fatherhood of God, in His relation to man, while universally possible, is not actually universal (except in infancy), but conditional and therefore limited. "The division," says Dr. William Newton Clarke, "is a sharp one, and very serious" (1: 137).

## 40 Final Test of the True Doctrine

There is great need that the atmosphere about this subject should be clarified. In common speech, Final test of the true doctrine very often in pulpit discourse, and quite generally in the literature of to-day, it seems to be taken for granted that God is the Father of all men, that all men are sons of God. We say it seems to be taken for granted; for we never heard a speaker, and, with only two exceptions, we have found no author, who attempts to establish the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood by an exposition both of the apparently favorable and unfavorable teachings of Scripture, and generally little or no reference is made to what the Bible has to say upon the subject. The evident explanation of this defect is that the doctrine is not taught in the Scriptures. But the true doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood, no more than any other doctrine of religion, can be determined by "philosophical preconceptions" or "sentimental preference,"

but only by a valid exposition of what the Bible teaches. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them" (Is. 8:20). This "is the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice."

The purpose of this book is, first, to consider the theories of the universal Fatherhood of God, in order to make manifest the tendencies <sup>Purpose of this book</sup> of the doctrine to undermine and destroy the faith of the Gospel; secondly, to interpret the teaching of Scripture upon the subject of the Divine Fatherhood; and, thirdly, to define what we conceive to be the true doctrine of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, accompanying this with a statement of its doctrinal, ethical, and sociological significance.



**PART I**  
**THEORIES OF THE**  
**UNIVERSAL FATHERHOOD**





# PART I

## THEORIES OF THE UNIVERSAL FATHERHOOD

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### A.—DESCRIBED

THE two main questions at issue are thus stated by Dr. W. N. Clarke: "God's Fatherhood is natural, and universal; God's Fatherhood is spiritual or religious, and therefore limited" (1: 135, 136). The distinction is fundamental. We heartily agree with the distinguished author, when he adds in his lectures before the School of Theology of Harvard University, "The division is a sharp one, and very serious" (1: 137). The following theories are put forth in defense of the former position.

The questions  
at issue

With the exception of Channing and Wendt, the advocates of the universal Fatherhood practically agree with Dr. W. N. Clarke in saying, "God is Father to

men, and men are sons of God, from the very fact that He made them, and made them like Himself" (1: 139).

A necessity of  
creation

A second theory is stated thus by Dr. J. C. C. Clarke: "A being is under the moral laws, and in the moral relations of the system, of which he is a part, only so far as he is personally ontologically related in that system. . . . A moral being is made moral by his personally ontological relation to his Creator. . . . Moral law does not exist for any beings who are not, in some sense, Children of the Creator" (15: 68).

An ontological  
necessity

The same author adds a third theory. "Moral science demands inflexibly that all men shall be recognized as related to their Creator by such likeness of being, and to God's Spirit by such derivation of spiritual being, that the name 'Child of God the Father' is a proper and the best name for that relation" (15: 340).

An ethical  
necessity

Dr. Fairbairn thinks that "the unity of man" and "the principle of solidarity" are "made possible by the filial constitution of the race" (7: 462). A sociological necessity

A fifth theoretical necessity this author finds in redemption. "Without the Fatherhood there could be no Atoner and no Atonement" (7: 484, 485, 438). Necessary to redemption

### B.—REFUTED

Neither a person nor a doctrine is to be condemned necessarily because found among associates of questionable reputation; but our universal habit of judging men by the character of those with whom they habitually consort is not far astray; and when any particular doctrine is found to be lauded generally by men holding false and pernicious views, and especially when such a doctrine is discovered to be a central and fundamental pillar in their un- A fundamental doctrine in false systems

scriptural or antiscriptural systems, it becomes us to look carefully to its basis and tendencies before bidding it welcome into what we may hold to be the circle of truth. Thus are we put on guard against the doctrine of the universal Divine Fatherhood, because it is

(a) *Unfortunate in its Associations*

Says Dr. A. J. Gordon (29: 109),  
 "Milton probably gives the true genesis of  
 this doctrine in these words,  
 which he puts into the mouth  
 of Satan:

" 'The son of God I also am, or was;  
 And if I was, I am; relation stands:  
 All men are sons of God.' "

—*Paradise Regained*, iv, 817.

Whether Dr. Gordon is correct in this or not, his position is certainly in harmony with the following associations of the doctrine.

One of the ideas of Christian Science is that of God "as one Father, with His universal family" (6: 568). Here too we

find the recent idea of the Motherhood of God. "As Elias represents the Fatherhood of God, through Jesus, so the Revelator (Rev. 12: 1) completes this figure with woman, as the spiritual idea or type of God's Motherhood" (6: 554). "We have not as much authority, in Divine Science, for considering God masculine, as we have for considering him feminine" (6: 510). It is strange that the New Testament, instead of calling God Father 256 times, does not speak of Him as Mother 129 times and Father only 127 times!

In Christian  
Science

The Mormons hold very literally that "God's Fatherhood is natural and universal," because they hold that

we are His children by pro-creation. "He (Adam) is our Father and our God, and the only God with whom *we* have to do." "When our Father Adam came into the garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body, and brought Eve, one of his wives, with

In Mormonism

## 50 In Unitarianism and Universalism

him.”<sup>1</sup> “Each God, through his wife or wives, raises up a numerous family of sons and daughters.”<sup>2</sup> And so here too we have the idea of a heavenly Mother. “Man has not only a Father in heaven, but a Mother also,” and therefore “Man, that is, his spirit, is the offspring of Deity, not in any mystical sense, but actually.”<sup>3</sup> Here is a “natural” relationship of man to God sufficiently emphasized, it would seem, to satisfy the most ardent advocates of the natural and universal Fatherhood.

Says R. R. Shippen (22: 646), Unitarians “believe in the one God as the In Unitarianism Creator of the universe and  
and Universalism Father of all souls, . . . of the sinner as of the saint.” And according to R. Eddy (22: 662), Universalists hold “that it is fundamental in the revelation through Christ that God is the Father of the spirits of all flesh.”

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Discourses*, vol. i, p. 50. The quotations from and references to Mormon works are taken from tracts sent out by the “League for Social Service,” Josiah Strong, President.

<sup>2</sup> *The Seer*, vol. i, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> *New Witness for God*, p. 461.

Believers in this doctrine may boast of some very good company; but their suspicions against its truthfulness ought to be aroused by the fact that it is a *fundamental* doctrine in some systems which do not preach the New Testament Faith, but another gospel, upon the proclamation of which there is pronounced, not a blessing, but an anathema (Gal. 1: 8, 9; Ezek. 13: 10-16).

Coming directly to a consideration on its merits of the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God, it is to be noted that it is

*(b) Not Grounded in any such Necessity as Is Alleged*

God is not man's Father because He created him. That this is the doctrine of Scripture, will be made clear in the Second Part of this discussion. The question is now, Is there any necessity in the nature of things requiring that God shall be the Father of

No necessity of  
creation

any of His creatures *simply because He is their Creator*, and which would therefore lead us to reexamine the validity of our Biblical argument and exegesis, or to conclude that Scripture is not in harmony with the necessity of things? Channing (5: 296) answers this claim thus: "God is our Father, not merely because He created us, or because He gives us enjoyment; for He created the flower and the insect, yet we call Him not their Father." If by the marvelous advances of science, the unthinkable should ever become possible, and the chemist should turn out of his laboratory a live being, and that being should possess many marvelous resemblances to the chemist himself, such a being, thus produced, would not be the *son* of the chemist. In other words, filial relationship can never be *created or made*, but can only be *begotten*.

It is replied that God is the Father of all, not simply because of creation, but because He has made all men like Himself.



First, let it be remembered that this is to abandon the position that fatherhood inheres in the Creator *as such*, so that the fact of His being our Creator, in and of itself, has nothing to do with His being our Father. And, secondly, it is to assume that fatherhood and sonship involve a likeness of nature between father and son, that is, that "to be a parent is to communicate a *kindred nature*" (5: 1004, 296; 1: 139). We must not forget that we are dealing with men since the Fall, and, if the Fall be denied, then with sinful men as we find them. Has man *naturally* a nature of sufficient likeness to God, to entitle him to be called a son of God? Unitarians and Universalists, of course, reply in the affirmative, holding that man's "nature is not corrupt and ruined" (22: 646), and "denying that depravity is natural" (4: 30). The limits of this treatise will not permit a discussion of the question of depravity. We can only refer to the Scriptural exposition which will

show that the depravity of man's nature is *natural* (p. 213 ff.), and submit the proposition that the only sufficient explanation of universal sin is an equally universal natural depravity, and call attention to the fact that the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God is based on a denial of the Scriptural doctrine of native depravity.

But whatever may be the native quality of man's nature, it is generally allowed that man is in fact sinful. Now, is there a sufficient likeness between man's sinful personality and the holy personality of God, for man to be a son of God? The filial relation, it is admitted, depends upon a likeness of nature. But a holy nature in man is not a necessary condition, since necessitated holiness is an impossibility and a contradiction of terms, but is conditioned on the free choice of the individual. Therefore sonship, which is not the outgrowth of creation alone, but is existent only when there is a kindred nature be-

tween father and son, is not a necessary and universal relationship of man to God, but is conditioned on man's choice of the holy character of God to be his character. Sonship in the Divine family is not a physical, but a moral and spiritual, relationship, and is therefore dependent on moral and spiritual conditions, and these in turn are dependent on man's free choice. This brings us to the truth which will appear in the beginning of the Biblical discussion (p. 152), and is sufficient to show that there is no necessity in the relation of the creature to the Creator which would compel a denial or a revision of the teaching of Scripture: namely, that sonship is grounded, not in creation, but in the new creation; that it is a relationship, not from nature, but by grace.

Neither is there any ontological necessity for this doctrine. Dr. J. C. C. Clarke only assumes that man's "personally ontological relation to his Creator" is a filial relation

No ontological  
necessity

(15: 68). His only attempt at proof is the assertion that "in the consciousness of spirit-being there is a line of conviction . . . that the souls of human persons are in a true sense children of their Creator" (15: 67). His assumption must suffer the same fate as the previously considered assumption that God is Father just because He is Creator, and for the same reasons. Since it was made apparently only in the interest of moral science, it can stand only as the next assumption to be considered stands.

No one will deny that moral law can exist only for free moral beings, and that

No ethical necessity	man is subject to moral law because he is a person. But
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Dr. Clarke's assertion that "moral science demands inflexibly that all men shall be recognized as children of God" (15: 340), and that "moral law does not exist for any beings who are not, in some sense, Children of the Creator" (15: 68), falls to the ground, because he nowhere shows

that all free moral agents must necessarily be children of God; because we have seen that no necessity in the nature of things makes such a relation essential; neither does the Scripture; and also because, on Dr. Clarke's own showing, man's relation to the Creator need not be a relation of sonship in order that moral obligations may be incurred; for he says that "the consciousness of the ownership that inheres in causation is itself the foundation and authority of what we call the law of rightness in the universe, or Moral Law," that "the word *ought* means" to "a free-willed person, like a man," "the authority and rights of The Creator as The First Cause," that "only as a Cause has God a right to govern" (15: 56, 57, 92). But if "only as a Cause," then surely He must not necessarily be a Father. We cannot think of God apart from His right to rule the universe and all that is therein; nor of any finite personal intelligence apart from his moral obligation to obey the sovereign

God; and these conceptions are not dependent on any filial or fatherly relations. So gratuitous is the assertion of man's universal sonship, that it can be omitted entirely even from Dr. Clarke's own statement of "the chief principles" of his philosophy of the New Testament, without in the least affecting the validity of the system (15: 299, 300).

The theory that this doctrine is necessary to the unity and solidarity of the race, is also without foundation. Doubtless this condition would be secured by an inalienable "filial constitution of the race" (7: 462), if such a state were actual or possible. But just as satisfactory an explanation is this, that both were made possible and necessary by the fact that God "made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17: 26), and also that all are descendants of one common earthly father. The first fact holds, even when the evolutionist denies the sec-

No sociological  
necessity

ond. The unity and solidarity of the race grow out of the unique and mutual constitution of mankind, regardless of any *filial* relationship to God. The higher conception of brotherhood will be considered later (p. 268 ff.).

So complete is the failure to establish this doctrine on the theory that it is necessary to redemption, that the opposite is the true Scriptural position. Says Dr. Fairbairn (7: 484, 485),

God's fatherly relationship to man not necessary to but a result of redemption

"The essence and act of sacrifice was the surrender of the Son by the Father, . . . and so we may say, without the Fatherhood there could be no Atoner and no Atonement; but with the Fatherhood the Atoner and the Atonement could not but be." But this can mean only that Fatherhood and Sonship were essential relations in the Godhead, and not that this Fatherhood must be universal in its relation to man, and especially at all stages of his eternal career.

But he has said previously that the end desired by the Godhead in creation "may be described as the realization of external relations correspondent to the internal; in other words, the creation of a universe which should be to God as a son, while He was to it as a Father" (7: 446, 447). We have no disposition to deny, but rather to join in emphasizing this fact. But while man is free and that freedom is used so largely as it is in the choice of sin, it cannot be claimed that every end Divinely desired is always and in every individual realized. God may and does desire, and uses every available means to bring it to pass, that every man shall be His son; but man could not be a son of God without being free, and, being free, he may act the fool and choose a Satanic, instead of a Divine character and conduct, and be a child of the Devil and not a child of God. When, therefore, Fairbairn says that, "if the motives and ends of God in the creation of man were paternal, then man's



filial relation follows" (7: 446), it must be replied that this could be true only in the original creation and now in infancy—that is, in man's irresponsible state; but that, when man comes to the state of responsible freedom, his filial relation is conditioned on his choice, and does not stand, "however unworthy a son he may prove himself to be," except in "the motives and ends of God." And this is in perfect harmony with Fairbairn's later and truer statement that "the affinity of nature and the filial relation" between God and man "are ideal, as *conceived* and *purposed* of God—not *actual*, as manifested in man and realized in history." This is "through sin" (7: 474).

Again, Fairbairn says: "Under a purely legal government the salvation of the criminal is impossible, but under a regal fatherhood the thing impossible is the total abandonment of the sinner. If salvation happens under the former, it is by other means than the forensic and the ju-

dicial; if loss is irreparable under the latter, the reason is not in the Father. And so we may say, in judgment the legal sovereign is just, but the paternal is gracious. The one reigns that he may prevent evil men from injuring the good, but the other reigns that evil may cease by evil men being saved" (7: 438). To this it may be replied: *First*, regardless of any doctrine or relation of fatherhood, no Being that we could think of rationally as God could permit a race of sinners to be brought into a state of hopeless ruin, with no provision made for their salvation. The infinite perfection of justice makes such a condition as unthinkable as any imagined universal fatherly relationship. *Secondly*, the learned author denies the possibility of salvation under a legal government, and then in the next sentence assumes that it may happen "by other means than the forensic and the judicial." But by the very terms employed—"a purely legal government"—the paternal

relationship toward those who are yet to be saved is excluded, and this vitiates the claim that an existing universal Fatherhood is essential in order to salvation. *Thirdly*, as long as man remains man, and therefore free, "the total abandonment of the sinner" must be conceived as a possibility—aye more, as a Divinely revealed certainty—even if the Ruler is a "regal Father." *Fourthly*, the reason of irreparable loss is never in God, whether He be the Father of all or not. *Fifthly*, the elements of justice and grace are not inherent in fatherhood as such; for one may be a father and the very embodiment of injustice and ungraciousness. They are inherent in the perfections of Deity, and are not conditioned on His fatherly relationship. God will protect the good and seek to save the sinning, whether He is a Father to any man or not; otherwise He would not be God. The same is true of love and righteousness (7: 441, 442).

But Fairbairn thinks that the universal

Fatherhood is necessary in order to salvation, because, as he affirms, "without affinities love cannot live. And so for God to love man, man must be akin to God; for man to love God, God must be akin to man" (7: 442). Properly interpreted, this is true. But the word "akin" is a broad word. In illustrating its meaning the dictionary says, "the cat is akin to the tiger;" but there is no relation of fatherhood and sonship here—they simply belong to the same group of animals. And so God and man belong to the same class of intelligent moral personalities; but this in itself does not involve the filial relation of man to God (pp. 152-155). Furthermore, Dr. Fairbairn himself says that this "affinity of nature" is only an "ideal, as conceived and purposed of God—not actual," because of sin (p. 61). It is enough that God and man belong to the same class of intelligent moral personalities, and that the "highest expression" of "affinity of nature" between them, which

is found "in Fatherhood and Sonship" (7: 473), is a possibility Divinely desired. God may and does love man, not because they are already akin in the highest sense, but because every one may be, and ought to become, a child of God—because God may thereby secure a son and the greatest happiness and well-being of one of His creatures. And this exalts the love of God. It is not extended to a child only, but "commended toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners" (Rom. 5: 8, 10; 1 Jno. 4: 10), "aliens," "foreigners," and "not sons" (Heb. 12: 8), God so loved us as to give His Son (John 3: 16), that we might have the right, privilege, and power "to become children of God" (John 1: 12). And so it becomes evident, both from Scripture and in the nature of things, not that the universal Fatherhood of God is necessary in order to the Atonement, but that the Atonement is necessary in order to make it possible that God might be the Father of any of the chil-

## 66 No Basis for a Universal Fatherhood

dren of men, over whom sin has had dominion.

We have examined every basis (except the Scriptural) alleged in support of this doctrine, and have found that there is no necessity in the nature of things—neither a creative, ontological, ethical, sociological, nor redemptive necessity—requiring the reason to hold such a belief. Later we shall see also that it has no basis in the Word, and hence that both Scripture and the logic of necessity unite in condemning the doctrine and asserting the conditioned, and therefore limited, but universally possible Fatherhood of God and sonship of man.

No basis in any  
necessity for a  
universal  
Fatherhood

### *(c) Inconsistencies of Orthodox Writers who Attempt to Defend This Doc- trine*

They tell us that *man by creation has the nature of a son of God, and yet that he must receive a new nature.* These po-

sitions are not consistent, and yet in substance they are constantly asserted in the same breath. Fatherhood and sonship must always "include the notion of a common nature" between the father and the son. If man is the son of God by creation, then for the same reason he has the nature of God, and no one with such a nature ever needs any other.

*Sonship is natural, universal, indestructible, and yet voluntary.* We know that those who thus speak, attempt to reconcile their statements on the theory of "two sonships, natural and spiritual, universal and special" (1: 143; 18: 165); but we know also that, if that "natural sonship" is anything more than a mere name, if the relation between God and man arising from creation "is in a most real sense a relation of Parent and offspring, Father and child," and that "such sonship is of course indestructible" (1: 138), then all talk about "voluntary sonship" (1: 148) is meaningless. We are the sons of God

by creation and nature, or we are not. If we are, and if that sonship is indestructible, then it may be consistent to speak of "an experience in which sonship is fulfilled, . . . the higher thing that the New Testament tells of" (1: 139), but it is inconsistent to speak of a "voluntary sonship," or of "becoming His sons indeed" (1: 145). If indestructible sonship results from creation, then there is no such thing as "voluntary sonship;" for sonship is sonship, and that "higher thing that the New Testament tells of" is not in itself sonship, but only the fruitage of sonship. But if we are not the sons of God by creation, then there is a "voluntary sonship," and such a sonship is conditional and never can be universal, unless all shall receive it voluntarily.

*We all are, and yet we must become, sons of God.* This is an inconsistency universally necessary among all evangelical Christians who attempt to hold the



doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God. Nothing is more clearly taught in the Bible than the necessity of sinners becoming the sons of God. Hence the unavoidable necessity of this inconsistency among those who try to hold to the Bible and to the unbiblical doctrine that all men are by nature sons of God. To say no more of authors already quoted,<sup>1</sup> where is the preacher, who ever gets anybody converted, that is not continually exhorting men to *decide to become* sons of God, and to this end reminding them that the right, privilege, and power for this very purpose are Divinely given (John 1: 12), and that the Holy Spirit witnesses to the relationship when it is accomplished (Rom. 8: 16)? Even so profound a scholar in the realm of philosophy as Professor Bowne does not escape this pitfall. He says, "But we are rebels. No, we are prodigal *sons*" (17: 44).; and "the supernatural reveals itself in this power to be-

<sup>1</sup>1: 145; 8: 14, 15; 7: 475, 479, 491.

## 70 Inconsistencies of the Orthodox

*come the children of God*" (17: 61).<sup>1</sup> And, again, after contending for a universal sonship, he speaks of the absurdity of any such notion, saying, "That one should call himself the child of God while working the works of the Devil, is not to be thought of for a moment" (17: 98). But why not, if sinners are not rebels, but only "prodigal sons"? Dr. Crawford recognizes "a difficulty in reconciling those statements [of the Bible about becoming sons of God by faith in Christ] with the conclusions we have already arrived at [that sonship is a common prerogative of all mankind]; more particularly may there seem to be a difficulty involved in the Scriptural application of the word *adoption*. . . . For this word *adoption* properly denotes the introduction into a family of one who does not belong to it by birth" (18: 167). Notwithstanding his thought that this difficulty "admits of a satisfactory solution," the fact is that

<sup>1</sup>The italics are ours.

the foregoing quotation gives the proper and as we shall see the Scriptural (p. 219) meaning of the word adoption. Men do not adopt their own sons; neither does God. There is no consistent place for adoption in any scheme containing the notion of a universal Fatherhood. If we *are*, there is no place for our *becoming*, the sons of God.

*We are by natural birth the sons of God, and yet we must be born of God.* Pray tell me, Why must I be born again, born of God, if I am already His son? What does birth mean, save the bringing into existence of a *child*? And if all men are inherently and naturally children, then on what basis can it be said to them, "Ye must be born again"? Here is a glaring inconsistency.

It is impossible to maintain a consistent evangelical phraseology on the assumption that all men are by nature children of God.

Consistency  
impossible

These learned men have not fallen into

these inconsistencies inadvertently, but only because they have attempted to achieve the impossible: namely, to hold "the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), in harmony with the inharmonious addition of the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God. One is surprised to find Dr. Crawford saying, "The proper object of faith is not the fact that *we are sons of God*, but the revealed truth that *Christ is able and willing to make us so*" (18: 189). After coming to this sentence, the average reader is tempted to think that the author might have spared himself the pains of writing, and his readers the time of reading a book of 450 pages, prepared for the express purpose of maintaining, in reply to Professor Candlish, "that we are the sons of God." And the fact that he is, in this connection, speaking of saving faith, does not remove the inconsistency, not to say absurdity, of declaring that "Christ is able and willing to make us" the sons of

God, who, according to his own theory, always have sustained that relationship as the inalienable right of intelligent creatures. The explanation is the fact that he has turned away from his controversy with the orthodox Candlish to contend with certain "liberalists" for a real saving faith that unites the believer to the Son of God. But in assuming such irreconcilably inconsistent positions, Dr. Crawford does not answer, but only gives away his case to Maurice and Robertson, whose latitudinarianism he seeks to crush. But those in whose faith the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood finds a consistent place, do not belong to Dr. Crawford's school, and to such these words from Beyschlag are very applicable: "People are far more bent on saying something that is new, than on saying something that is tenable" (II: xxi). And he might have added that there is a tremendous bent to-day toward such an emphasis upon Divine mercy as to exclude all practical consider-

ation of the awful but just as certain fact of sin and its terrible consequences.

(d) *Reductio ad Absurdum*

The foregoing inconsistencies approach very near to the realm of absurdity, if in fact they do not enter it. But passing them as lightly as possible, the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood certainly does suffer by the argument, *reductio ad absurdum*.

If, according to Dr. Bradford, the fact of owing our being to God, constitutes God our Father—in other words, if “the essence of fatherhood is the giving of life” (2: 64), then God is as much the Father of snakes and toads as He is ours, and they are also our brothers.

If “to all rational beings everywhere the conceiving and originative rational Being is Father” (1: 122), then God is the Father of the Devil and all evil spirits, and Satan is a

God, the Father  
of animals

God, the Father  
of the Devil

brother to Christ and a son of God. If Dr. Clarke should seek to avoid this horrible, but unavoidable, inference from his doctrine, by falling back upon the additional element in his definition that these "rational beings" must be "persons like Himself" (1: 121, 139), it would be sufficient to reply, first, that he does not consider sinful character a bar to sonship; for he teaches that all men are sons of God; and, secondly, that we understand that when the angel, who became the Devil, was created, he was pure, and therefore, according to every element of Dr. Clarke's own definition, a son of God, and, further, that "the paternal," and hence also the filial, "relation is natural, permanent, unchanging" (1: 129, 130), that "relation stands," and therefore, the Devil, being once a son of God by virtue of his creation in the Divine image, is, and forever will be, a son of God, a brother of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Every true father loves his child. God

surely is a true Father to whomsoever He is a Father at all. But God  
God loves the Devil is the Father of the Devil, because He is the Father of "all rational beings everywhere." The conclusion is inevitable, that God must love the Devil. And if it should be doubted, Dr. Clarke proves it: "Grant creative intelligence," "and you are compelled to grant affectionate interest in kindred intelligence" (1: 125), and we have seen that sin is no bar to his notion of "kindred."

That the inhabitants of hell are all children of God, follows from the logically  
Hell inhabited only by children of God necessary implication of the universal Fatherhood, that Satan and all evil spirits and all the lost souls of men are and forever must be children of the Divine Father.

Such are some of the logical corollaries which reduce this doctrine to an absurdity. If even their recital  
Intolerable implications of the doctrine has seemed like blasphemy, it should not be overlooked that this is due



## Intolerable Implications of the Doctrine 77

to the character of the doctrine, of which these implications are the inevitable fruits. Some think it would be intolerable to entertain the idea that there is any man who is not a son of God. We find nothing derogatory to the Divine One in bringing into being such a personality as man, with such possibilities, and provision graciously made for such a glorious destiny as is involved in being a son of God (pp. 203, 225), even though man by sin should forfeit his Divine sonship. But to our view it is intolerable to think, as the doctrine of the universal Divine Fatherhood compels us to think, that God is the Father of the Devil, all evil spirits and lost souls, that the Devil is a brother of our Lord and beloved of our Father, and that the whole population of the infernal regions consists of the children of God. We are taught to hate the Devil, but never to hate whom God loves—any child of God or anyone who may become God's child.

There is one avenue of escape from

## 78 Universalism the Only Alternative

these abhorrent views, while holding to  
**Universalism** the belief that God is a uni-  
**the only**  
**alternative** versal Father, and that is to  
deny the existence of a personal Devil,  
and declare, not that the inhabitants of  
hell are children of God, but that there is  
no hell to be inhabited. We have been  
following out the necessities of logical  
thought from the standpoint of the ortho-  
dox Christian. There is another class of  
people who know not such a dilemma, but  
who, by making the foregoing denials and  
assuming, with the same indifference to  
the Holy Scriptures, the truth of the  
universal Fatherhood, conclude therefrom  
that salvation is the universal destiny of  
the race. This is their argument: God is  
the Father of all men and all men are chil-  
dren of God. But all the children of God  
are also His heirs and joint heirs with  
Jesus Christ (Rom. 8: 17; Gal. 4: 7).  
Therefore all men are the heirs of God  
and will be saved eternally. Thus is this  
doctrine made

### C.—THE MAJOR PREMISE OF UNIVERSALISM

Many Christians and oftentimes Christian teachers too quickly assume a doctrinal position without carefully weighing the logical tendencies and inevitable results of their doctrine. A person already grounded in the most essential facts of the Gospel and whose faith is established by a clear experience of conscious salvation, may not himself be side-tracked religiously by coming to believe in some false view of Christian doctrine, but the result is likely to be very different and disastrous in the case of the average man who is not so grounded and who has no such experience. It is in the interests of such that we are bound to consider our positions more carefully than many reckless teachers and speakers are wont to do. We have been put on our guard already against this teaching by the fact of its unfortunate as-

Responsibility  
of Christian  
teachers;  
danger of false  
doctrine

sociations. If it shall be found to be true that this doctrine is at home only among such associations, and that its general tendency is to lead its adherents thither, then evangelical Christians will have reason enough to discard it forever. All who are tempted by the superficial attractiveness of this conception, need to be reminded of the very important fact that the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God is the basis of Universalism.

(a) *The Only Logical Home of This Doctrine*

Universalism is the only system, indeed, in which this doctrine is logically at home. The profoundest Inconsistent with evangelical truth scholars have been unable to fit it consistently into any orthodox system (pp. 66-73).

More or less tendency to Universalism Tendency to Universalism very frequently is manifested in the writings of those who teach it. Dr. Bradford is not supposed

to be a Universalist; but his book does that system great service. All who hold the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood agree with him in this: "No one can by any act of his own put himself beyond the reach of the Fatherhood of God" (2: 185). What follows? "But we know that He cannot violate the eternal purpose of love, which is that somehow and sometime all His children shall reach the fullness of the stature of Christ. . . . The Divine plan can be defeated by our folly no more than the falling of a meteor can disarrange the movement of the stellar universe.. . . If God cannot be defeated, then must we not believe that His redemptive agencies will at length be victorious, and every child of God come to himself and return to his Father? Apparently that is the only possible conclusion, but here we are met by the mysterious fact of freedom. . . . Will any forever resist that discipline? The possibility, I must admit; the proba-

bility, I doubt" (2: 185, 186, 190, 260, 267).

Dr. Fairbairn states a line of argument, from which he reaches conclusions that, despite his repudiation of Universalism, involve either mutual contradictions, or Universalism, or an eternal, instead of a temporal, probation for man (7: 438, 447, 457, 466, 468). If the universal Father can neither annihilate the sinner, nor surrender him to endless punishment, nor save him against his will, without allowing sin to be the victor, or conceding it a "recognized place and function," or destroying the personality of man—both the latter alternatives being also to allow sin the victory—then all men must come finally to accept salvation of their own free will, which involves future probation and Universalism, or "the conflict must go on forever," God ever seeking to save by the expulsion of sin, which involves an eternal probation with sin still the victor; for is

not defeat just as great whether it is acknowledged or not? If God cannot end that conflict, is not that a more decided defeat than the ending of sin by the annihilation of the sinner or by the inflicting of an eternal penalty that shall put an end forever to the operation of sin? But, after all, is the failure to realize an end impossible in the nature of things—such as the salvation of a free person against his will—a defeat on the part of God? Does He not remain Sovereign, and man simply defeat himself? God carries out His purpose of willing the happiness of being on the only possible condition, the free submission of the human will, and He also realizes His desire for sons; for if some will not meet the conditions of sonship, others will—His feast will be supplied with guests and His home with children. Against Dr. Fairbairn's notion of the wreck of the universe or a part of it, it must be remembered that the system—and all persons in it who choose to con-

form to the necessary and perfectly practicable conditions—will be upheld and perfected and reach the goal, whatever may happen to those who will not be “in harmony with the good ends pursued” (15: 102). Consistent with the nature of things, this is the highest victory on the part of God.

Having become entangled with this doctrine of God as a universal Father in an attempt to make it the interpreting principle in theology (7: 427, 428, 444, 445), Dr. Fairbairn time and again plunges along the natural and logical course, until he sees the specter of Universalism looming up before him, when he hesitates, retreats, starts again, moves with greater speed than ever, and stops the more suddenly, leaving himself at last in a position which may be likened aptly to that of a locomotive, which, by being reversed, has been brought to a stop on the brink of a chasm, the bridge over which has been burned away, and hangs



in teetering uncertainty, no one being able to tell whether the wrecking crew will reach there in time to pull it back, or whether more of the bank and road-bed will crumble and the engine be hurled headlong into the yawning abyss below.

Universalists, of course, do not hesitate, but "emphasize the Fatherhood of God" as applying to "the sinful" as well as the good (4: 19, 20).

Avowed by  
Universalists

We have noted the statements of Mr. Shippen, the Unitarian, and Mr. Eddy, the Universalist (p. 50). Dr. Adams, in one of the Universalists' *Manuals of Faith and Duty*, declares, "It is upon the sublime truth of the Divine Fatherhood that we build the faith in man's final holiness. . . . Upon any line of logic from this great thought, we come inevitably to the conclusion that mankind is destined to redemption from the thralldom of sin and its sequences" (3: 83, 84).

## 86 Universalism's Logical Chain

(b) *Their Major Premise Admitted, the Logic of Universalists Is Both Scriptural and Unanswerable*

If the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood be admitted as a premise, the logic of the Universalist's conclusion seems to us to be both Scriptural and unanswerable. Let him who can, while avoiding the inconsistencies and absurdities previously discussed (pp. 66-78), break the logical chain.

If all men by creation are children of God, then they are partakers of the Divine nature; for there is always a common nature between parent and child. "Identity of nature between parent and child is essential to the idea of fatherhood" (2: 59).

If we are partakers of the Divine nature by creation or by our natural birth, then the new creation, the new birth, regeneration cannot be shown to be a necessity; for their only

Universalism's  
logical chain

Sons have the  
Father's  
nature

If by creation,  
no need of the  
new birth

object is that we may be made over "after the image of Him that created" us (Col. 3: 10). But there is no place for such a process in the case of those who are "constitutionally" in that likeness by "*the native and essential nature of the soul*," and who "*are by our very natures the children of God*" (3: 15, 22, 23).

For such natures—and such is the nature of all whose "birthright is inalienably sonship" (3: 83), or else language has no meaning—all that is necessary is a development which is "natural," "constructive," and "inevitable," "*a necessity of the soul*," "*a normal and natural fact of man's experience*, as much in the nature of things as the change of the embryo into the child, and of the child into the man, . . . the evolution of a higher humanity out of a lower," "*the step which every sinner will at last be constrained to take*. . . by the necessities of his own nature, . . . the law of that constitution in which he was

Need only a  
development  
inevitable

formed" as a son of God (3: 55, 56). But if the only thing necessary is a "constructive" work, rather than a reconstructive, then there is really no place for a new creation, a new birth, but only for a development of the original life; for birth involves the bringing into existence of a new life and a change of relationship, or rather the creation of a new relationship—that of sonship.

If all men inalienably are sons of God, then also they are under God's parental government; and it follows that no one is subject to punishment, but only to fatherly chastisement or discipline, "that what is called punishment is always disciplinary, and intended to restore" (2: viii), that "His authority over us, . . . His laws, . . . and all His punishments . . . are parental, designed to prune, to restrain, and to heal" (4: 20), that the Devil, once, and therefore inalienably and forever, a son of God by his

All under God's  
parental gov-  
ernment; not  
subject to  
punishment,  
but only to  
discipline

native and essential nature, is not being "reserved in everlasting chains," but is being *disciplined* under the "*parental government*" of his heavenly Father with the design that he shall be "healed" and "restored." "In modern times," says Professor J. S. Candlish, "such writers as F. D. Maurice, F. W. Robertson, et al., have made great use of the idea that all men are children of God, to exclude the doctrine of God's judicial dealings" (25: 220<sup>2</sup>).

If all men by nature are children of God, possessed of the Divine nature, under His parental govern-  
 ment, and not subject to Atonement  
unnecessary  
 punishment, but only to fatherly discipline, the Atonement is unnecessary; for repentance is an all-sufficient basis of forgiveness in a parental government, as it is claimed that the parable of the Prodigal Son plainly shows (p. 185 ff.). Dr. Bradford concludes his argument on the absurdity of vicarious suffering as the

ground of forgiveness, by this indisputable assertion: "Fatherhood needs only to know that the son has truly repented" (2: 201-213). And it must also be true, if the only essential change in man is "a necessity of the soul" from the original and physical creation or birth—and this follows, if "we are by our very natures the children of God"—that this change or development cannot be conditioned on, or result from Christ's vicarious death, that it is not a matter of grace, but of nature.

Universalists, while they have ignored Paul's theology (Rom. 8: 9, 14), never have failed to grasp his logic, "If children, then heirs" "if children, then heirs." If all are sons, then all are heirs, and their destiny is secure on the ground of rightful inheritance. If this results from our natural relationship, then Universalism follows as a logical necessity. Weiss, speaking on the basis of sonship only through the new birth by faith, shows "a new ground . . . of hope . . . in the

nature of the relation of son, . . . that it confers a right to the inheritance. . . . A share in the glory is expressly laid claim to as the child's right, on the ground of inheritance. . . . As the Son of God has already plainly attained to the inheritance of a share in the Father's Lordship (Heb. 1: 2), so also must the children of God . . . be conducted forward to the fatherly glory" (Heb. 2: 10).<sup>1</sup> The logic is the same, whatever the basis of sonship, or whoever may be the sons. If the argument is correct—and who can dispute it successfully, and why should anyone wish to?—that the nature of the relation of son confers a right to the inheritance, then there is no escape from Universalism, if we once accept the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God. "If *children*"—that is all the Apostle wishes to know, and the one fact to which the Spirit bears witness—"if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom.

<sup>1</sup>27: 61, 62, 218, 219.

## 92 Universalism's Logical Chain

8: 17; Gal. 4: 7). If anyone should be inclined to doubt the necessity of this conclusion, every doubt should be dispelled by remembering that the affirmation in question is that all men are *by nature* unconditionally and inalienably sons of God. But sons have the nature of the father. A tree by a necessity of its life brings forth and develops fruit according to its kind. So too, if a man by creation unconditionally and inalienably has the nature of God, by "a necessity of the soul" such a man must develop sooner or later "into the higher life," which involves an entrance into the inheritance of the sons of God. If the sonship and the nature belonging thereto are unconditional and inalienable, then the inheritance involved in sonship must also be inevitable. "If a son, then an heir through God" (pp. 203, 225).

Of course, the claim of Universalism, A conclusion unscriptural but logical that "salvation is the common destiny of the race" (3: 19), is without Scriptural foundation.



But on the assumption of the truth of the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood, that conclusion is logically inevitable, and each of the links in the Universalist's logical chain—while the most of them in many particulars are utterly inconsistent with Biblical teaching—would be found to have a show of basis in the Word sufficient to make the whole system a powerful and dangerous delusion.

(c) *Universalism's Major Premise Repudiated as False*

The fallacy of the logic of Universalism lies in the fact that it is built upon a false major premise—the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God—a doctrine which has no basis in Scripture or in the nature of things. Pricking this bubble of false exegesis and fallacious reasoning, the entire structure falls to the ground of its own weight.

Men are not sons of God by creation;

## 94 The New Birth Essential to Sonship

for the new birth is essential to a partici-

The new birth  
essential to  
sonship

pation in the Divine nature. When Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born anew," He was not speaking of a "constructive development" as an "inevitable necessity of the soul," but of a reconstruction which must take place by a voluntary choice, if Nicodemus would partake of the Divine nature and hence become a son of God. This is evident from the reason alleged: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh"—flesh in the sense of depraved moral quality; "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit"—spirit in the sense of holy moral quality, resulting from a reconstruction and participation in the Divine nature, and hence leading to sonship in the Divine family by the only process that can make anyone really and by nature a member of any family, that is, by birth. Here is the rock which I fear is causing many besides avowed Universalists to founder. We are getting so "refined" that we imagine our-

selves already partakers of the Divine nature and children of the heavenly Father, with no necessity before us but a natural and inevitable development of what we now are; and we forget that it was to a truly refined and cultivated gentleman, scholar, religious teacher, and ruler, that Jesus said, Ye must undergo a transformation and reconstruction of nature as radical in its character as the process of birth—"Ye must be born anew." The terms of the Bible make it plain that, before a "constructive development" can begin in the case of an adult sinner, a radical reconstruction must take place. There must be a "resurrection," "creation," "birth," in order that there may be "life," a "new creature," a "son." The old heart, spirit, and law must be replaced by "a new heart," God's Spirit, and God's law. The idea that all men are sons of God, in possession of the Divine nature, and needing only an "inevitable constructive development," lowers regeneration to

## 96 The New Birth Essential to Sonship

the level of a purely natural evolutionary process (3: 56). This is done professedly in the interest of a "larger hope." But the "larger hope" is a delusion; for while the God of evangelical Christianity has infinite care for every individual, and His Son has gone to the Cross and still employs the resources of the Almighty in order that every child of man who will may be translated from the power, kingdom, and family of Satan into the liberty, light, kingdom, and family of God, by means of a personal reconstruction as radical as birth, we must not forget that the evolutionary process of "constructive development" cares nothing for the loss of individuals by the millions, while it moves on with cold heartlessness to the perfection of the species. No, "the old man" does not partake of the Divine nature, as he would do, if a child, but "is corrupt," "earthly, sensual, devilish," and must "be renewed in the spirit, and put on the new man that after God hath been created in

## New Birth and Sonship Conditional 97

righteousness and holiness of truth.”<sup>1</sup> Such is the teaching of the Bible and the fact of personal experience. Likeness of nature must exist between father and child. But man naturally is not characterized by such a likeness to God (pp. 54, 153), and can receive it only by the new birth. Therefore those who have not been born again, born of God, are not by creation or nature the children of God. The new birth is a necessity, because there is no other way of receiving the nature without which no filial relationship to the Divine is possible.

This new birth is not inevitable, but conditional; hence the filial nature and relationship are conditional, and only those who are born of God are children of God.

The new birth,  
and hence the  
sonship, is  
conditional

If language has not lost its meaning, and if birth means anything, it means these two things: first, the bringing into existence of a nature in the likeness of its par-

<sup>1</sup> Eph. 4: 22-24; Col. 3: 10; Jas. 3: 15.

entage; and, secondly, constituting the relation of the person bearing that likeness as a child of his own parents. To be born, is to become somebody's child, with the likeness of those giving the birth; to be born of God, is to become a child of God in the likeness of the Father who "begat us." The birth being conditioned on "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," the filial nature and relationship resulting therefrom are likewise conditioned, and only those who are born of God are children of God.

Only children are under a parental government. God is the Sovereign of a general moral government, in which all men are subjects, which is conducted on the principle of justice by meting out rewards and punishments to individuals according to their deserts. In addition to this, there is a Divine parental government under the economy of grace, "whose aim is the correction and spiritual discipline of those

Only children  
under a  
parental  
government

who," by leaving off their sins through repentance and being born again and adopted by faith through the operation of the Holy Spirit, choose to avail themselves of this gracious privilege of being members of the family of God. That there is such a government, no one who believes the Bible at all will be found to deny. "The mistake with regard to it," says Bishop Merrill, "is the habit of 'liberalists' of applying its gracious principles to the moral government of God over the rebellious, and claiming for all men, upon the ground of natural relationship, the rights, immunities, and spiritual advantages which belong to the children in the household of faith. It is thus assumed that God's government is all paternal; that He deals with all sinners as a loving father deals with his erring children; that He punishes them only for correction; and that He never can disown them as children or disinherit them. This mistake we hesitate not to pronounce one of the most

## 100 Others under Moral Government

stupendous and ruinous that has ever been made in the interpretation of God's administration over men" (19: 151, 152). But the whole claim is as baseless as its foundation principle—the universal Divine Fatherhood—is false. All men are not children of God. Hence all are not subjects of His parental government; for only children can be under a parental government.

All who are "not sons" are subjects of the moral, as distinct from the parental, government of God. Of course, the doctrine in question requires the denial of such a government. Dr. Fairbairn is opposed to the idea which makes God "a juristic and judicial person" and man "a civil subject" (7: 390, 428-431). He thinks that "the absolute sovereign without the father is a tyrant, a despot" (7: 435). This is not necessarily true, and in the case of God is an impossibility. It depends entirely upon the character, the nature of the sovereign.

Others under  
God's moral  
government



Dr. Fairbairn makes the contrast between a selfish, sinful, imperfect sovereign, and a self-denying, pure, and wise father (7: 437). But this is an unfair comparison, when God is the one whose attitude toward, and method of dealing with men we are seeking to determine. Even among sinful and imperfect men, history has recorded more than once of the sovereign that he "put aside every personal aim or ambition to devote himself to the welfare of those whom he ruled."<sup>1</sup> If this could be said of Aelfred, how much more truthfully must it be said of the infinitely holy, good, and perfect God.

We join heartily with Dr. Fairbairn in emphasizing that "the determinative element in His (Christ's) idea of God is the paternal, and in His idea of man the filial" (7: 449), if the provision be added and kept in mind, that this is true only as it relates to the ideal condition and relation, the end toward

The ideal is  
paternal

<sup>1</sup>*A Short History of the English People*, Green, p. 80.

## 102 The Actual Is Paternal and Moral

which all the resources of Heaven are being used, but that it is not a universal condition and relation always and everywhere existing. In this ideal condition which Christ has come to establish, and which can be realized only as we depart from iniquity and enter the Divine family through Christ the door, the "determinative conception is the Fatherhood, and so through it the Sovereignty must be read and interpreted. In all His regal acts God is paternal; in all His paternal ways regal" (7: 444). But the ideal is not universally the actual.

The actual includes both a moral and a paternal government. Dr. Fairbairn thinks that "fatherhood is the source and basis of sovereignty" (7: 434). This was probably true of the human "primitive or aboriginal natural sovereign." But there is a natural sovereignty of God that does not find its basis in law, or power, or paternity, but in His relation as Creator—in

The actual is  
paternal and  
moral

the very nature of Deity. God is the natural Sovereign of all that He has created, and He is this utterly independent of any idea of Fatherhood. Sovereignty is essentially and eternally inherent in God, not as Father, but as God, or else He is not God at all. His sovereignty, in its relation to His children, can and must be interpreted by His Fatherhood; but not so in the case of those "who will not be sons." The home is the analogy of God's paternal government, but it is not, as Dr. Bradford asserts, "the analogy of the universe" (2: 199). This mistake has led both of these authors into many absurd inconsistencies, the only way out of which is an acknowledgment of the moral government of God as entirely distinct from His paternal government. The great need of the sinner is the experience of the new birth and the blessing of adoption, which mean "a transference of the entire business of God's gracious dealing with us from the region of law and jurisprudence

to the domain of the affections" (32: 68, 69), into the inner circle of the Divine family where only "God dealeth as with sons." The Letter to the Hebrews makes it evident that only those who "endure chastening" are dealt with by God as His sons, and that all others are "bastards, and not sons" (Heb. 12: 7, 8), and can neither claim, expect, nor receive the treatment of sons. Only children can be under a paternal government and receive paternal treatment.

Those who are not sons of God are subjects of His moral government, and liable to judicial treatment. To avoid this unpleasant, but Scriptural and logical conclusion, seems to be the real purpose of the doctrine that God is a universal Father. Says Dr. Fairbairn, "The paternal authority does not so much punish as chastise" (7: 437). Dr. Bradford declares that "punishment is contrary to the true idea of the

Those "not  
sons" are  
liable to  
punishment

Animus of the  
doctrine, to  
get rid of  
punishment

family" (2: 247). We have noted that Maurice and Robertson made much use of the idea of the universal Fatherhood to get rid of the notion of God's judicial dealings with mankind. A favorite thought—and a true one—with the advocates of this doctrine is, that a sovereign punishes, but a father chastises. Now, when we remember that, if there are any to whom God is not a Father, but only a moral governor, such must be liable to punishment; and, further, that, if anyone of this class should act so as to place himself finally beyond the possibility of becoming a member of the family of God, he would, in the very nature of the case, be under the doom of eternal punishment, we can see readily that the real reason for the wild rush to maintain the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood, in spite of inconsistencies and the Word of God, is to rid the world of the notion of final punishment for sin, leaving all subject only to chastisement or discipline.

Speaking of punishment, Dr. Bradford says, "A Scriptural word it surely is, but Punishment, a Scriptural word and idea a Scriptural idea it is not . . . since there . . . it suggests chastisement with a view to reformation" (2: 246). "What is called punishment is always disciplinary and intended to restore" (2: viii). This author assumes that all men are children of God, that "the eternal purpose of love is that all His children shall reach the fullness of the stature of Christ," and that "the Divine plan can be defeated by our folly no more than the falling of a meteor can disarrange the movement of the stellar universe," and thence concludes that "the Scripture which says, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord,' " does not mean that God will punish, but only that He will chastise (2: 186-190). He thinks that "the idea of punishment is essentially barbaric" (2: 246); but it is folly to assert this of righteous punishment; and that there is such a thing as righteous punish-

ment, will be seen in the next section. Dr. Bradford's view of human prerogative must be wonderfully enlarged, or else his view of the Divine prerogative is strangely limited; for he says, "What would violate love in man would violate it in God" (2: 250). This is so far from established truth, that many times what may be right and benevolent in God, would be criminal in man. Has the human father the right of life and death over his son? Or has not He who gave the life the right to take it away, without violating love? Dr. Bradford admits that punishment is a Scriptural word, and a very prominent one it certainly is. His claim that it must not be interpreted as meaning punishment, is based entirely upon the assumption that God sustains only the relation of a Father to the universe (2: 252). Since it has been shown that this doctrine is without foundation, this claim may be dismissed as groundless, and we may conclude that the Scriptures mean what they say and

that punishment is not only a Scriptural word but a Scriptural idea as well.

The trouble with the opposers of the idea of punishment seems to be, that their vision is so befogged by certain worn-out theological tenets about "countless myriads in torment exhibiting the glorious holiness of the Almighty in His hatred of sin" (2: 255), and a "merely retributive or retaliatory" justice (7: 467), that they cannot grasp the rational Scriptural doctrine of punishment. The idea of punishment which has been before them is so "essentially barbaric and foreign to all that is known of the Deity" (2: 246), that they revolt at the notion of punishment altogether, and conclude that it has no place in the Divine government. If they could see, not only that justice in the Divine government can never become "merely retributive and retaliatory," but also that there must be a retributive penalty *which always has rectoral ends*, and that such

Punishment has  
ends worthy  
of Divine  
goodness



punishment not only has a righteous basis in the demerit of sin, but also is necessitated by its rectoral ends, and the Divine holiness and goodness, the fog would be lifted forever. There is a failure to set forth the design of penal suffering (2: 243), to grasp the rectoral ends of penalty (2: 253), to distinguish between suffering and punishment in the case of the one punished, and the result on those who behold it (2: 255; 7: 438). In one sense, doubtless, the "methods and ends" of God's government "are always corrective, redemptive" (7: 438). By the warning of the certainty of punishment, He would save us from sin; and by its inflictions, He not only would punish the offenders justly, but also emphasize His warning and thus save those who are still within the reach of mercy. But all suffering is not punishment, though God has "so ordered the universe that the tendency of suffering will be remedial" (2: 255) in the case of the lovingly obedient who

## 110 Punishment Necessary to These Ends

really believe that "to them that love God all things work together for good," or who will have the heart and good sense to be led by their sufferings to see that earth's sufferer needs a heavenly support and Comforter. What are the ends of punishment which make it worthy of the Divine character? The upholding of the integrity of God's moral government, both for the honor of the Ruler and the good of His subjects; and the restraint of sin, the promotion of holiness, and the reduction of misery to the minimum. The Divine perfections make these ends imperative upon God's part, and in the moral state of humanity it is reasonable to suppose that punishment is necessary to their accomplishment (34: 71-73).

It certainly is true that, for aught we know to the contrary, punishment is necessary to these ends. Dr. Punishment  
necessary to  
these ends Bradford thinks that "history . . . has demonstrated . . . the failure of punishment as a means of pre-

venting crime," that "murder is nearly if not quite as frequent where the death penalty is rigorously executed as where it is unknown" (2: 246). We wonder how he would like to risk his own life and property where penalty is not legislated and punishments are not enforced against crime? His statements in this case, like the doctrines of the universal Fatherhood, Universalism, and the views of punishment that we have been considering, are based on a morbid sentimentalism and an ignoring of Scripture and facts. Over against his opinion, we place that of Dr. James M. Buckley, which he supports by facts: "To abolish capital punishment directly or indirectly is one of the most effective means of promoting murder and other felonies, and also lynching. The awful increase of homicides and lynching in this country has been parallel with the spread of excessive sentimentality in dealing with crime. . . . Imprisonment for life offers a premium on additional mur-

## 112 Punishment Necessary to These Ends

der." The same would be true, if the reformatory were substituted altogether for the prison. "Men have decoyed their victims across the line from States where capital punishment existed into those where it did not, so that if convicted they would not be executed. . . . In 1837 the law of the State of Maine was so amended as to make capital punishment optional with the governor. He rarely awarded this extreme penalty; as a consequence murders increased to such an extent that in 1860 Maine had become notorious for its murders; yet from 1834 to 1864 not an execution took place. . . . Perham refused to enforce the law, and capital crime increased more rapidly than ever. Finally the Legislature passed a law restoring the death penalty. Wagner and Howell were hung for the murder of five or six victims, men, women, and children. During the entire year following the passage of that act only one homicide occurred in Maine, and in that case the mur-

derer committed suicide immediately after committing his crime; yet under the influence of an effeminate sentimentality, in the very face of these facts, in 1876 the Legislature abolished capital punishment, and in less than one year afterward eleven cruel and unnatural murders were committed in the State. In the State of New York capital punishment was practically abolished in 1860, but so great was the sudden increase of murders in this State, under that law, that in 1862 the Legislature was compelled to restore capital punishment."<sup>1</sup>

The fact is that the failure in restraining crime is not so much in the principle of punishment, as in unwise legislation and faithlessness in the enforcement of law, and the morbid sentimentality which is partly to blame for both. These weaknesses do not pertain to the Divine government. More work of reform—which Dr. Bradford wisely commends (2: 246)

<sup>1</sup> Editorial in *The Christian Advocate*, May 9, 1901, p. 8.

## 114 Punishment Necessary to These Ends

—should be attempted, and God goes to the limit along this line in His government; but still, even on our author's own showing, there is a large per cent. of incorrigibles for whom the prison and punishment are necessities. Discipline, intended to heal and restore, is the thing for those who will be reformed and transformed, who will come into the family and thus under God's parental government, where He can chasten and develop them as sons; but beyond the parental, under the moral government of God, there is a punishment which is intended for the incorrigible and whose object is not to save the one who falls under its doom, but to deter others from taking his course, maintain the integrity of the government, protect those who choose righteousness, and thus promote holiness and reduce misery to the minimum. Who *knows* that these ends could be attained better by means of chastisement or discipline alone than by means of punishment too?

Who among mortals is possessed of the omniscience which alone could make him competent to declare such knowledge, against the fact that punishment plainly is re-  
Punishment revealed in Scripture, the final authority  
vealed in Scripture, the final source of authority? On this subject Dr. Bradford discards the Bible, and substitutes as his authority "a mother's intuition" and "the voice of the heart," meaning by the latter, "the whole man asserting himself after seeing rather than speculating" (2: 233, 234, 237, 244). But his book reads very much as if its author had speculated much more than he had seen. Until he gives us results of his "seeing" that compare favorably in wisdom and their evidences of authority with Biblical revelation, common and common-sense mortals will not subordinate prophets and apostles to the poets, nor trust to human sentimentality and humanly devised probabilities (2: 233, 235, 239, 244, 263) for authority on these profoundest and most vital

problems and concerns of life and destiny, but will look to that Word which shall never pass away. Concerning those classes whose destiny so greatly perplexes Dr. Bradford, they will say in faith, "The Judge of all the earth will do right," and then they will proceed as rapidly as possible to acquaint these and all others with the will of that Judge. They will not appeal from the wisdom of the Infinite to the sentimentalism of the finite, being assured that any government that should appeal the decisions of its criminal cases to such feelings would speedily come to an end, and that this must be as true of the Divine as of any human government. They will conclude with Dr. Miley: "Our reason is incompetent to pronounce against eternal punishment. . . . A chief perplexity respects the use of penalty as a necessary means of government. If such, then, be the state of facts with us in all the forms of human government, we surely cannot determine what shall be the provisions



and ministries of the Divine government, the sway of which is over all intelligences. The assumption of any such ability is most pretentious. And yet the man who finds the government of his little boy an utter perplexity can tell you just how God should govern the moral universe. With the narrow limitations of our own knowledge, the Scriptures are the only sufficient source of truth respecting the duration of future punishment" (37: 469). When the author of the Letter to the Hebrews makes the distinction which he does between those who are sons and those who are not sons, and speaks of the sons only as being chastened, he implies that something else happens to those who are not sons. We are not left in doubt as to what that is. The Bible is clear and constant in its warnings of punishment, and we have seen before that it means what it says. Those who reject its voice are left only to baseless human conjecture that can result, to the thoughtful, only in trembling in

## 118      Men Liable to Punishment

anticipation of possible but unknown terrors.

That men are liable to punishment, follows as the inevitable conclusion from the

**Men liable to punishment** premises already established: namely, that some men are not the children of God; that only children are under a parental government and the law of chastisement and discipline; and that all others are subjects of God's moral government and under the law of rewards and punishments.

Forgiveness and the new birth are grounded, not on repentance, but in the

**Forgiveness and the new birth grounded in the Atonement** Atonement; whereas the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood not only leaves no place

for the Atonement, as we have seen (p. 89), but even actually leads its devotees to go farther than the "modern prophets" of the moral influence theory (2: 206). If anyone who holds this doctrine should deny this result in his own thought, he should be reminded that it is

only because he has not carried his doctrine to its logical consequences, and that he has started down a decline, the end of which is a denial of any atonement in a Divine Christ. If he himself does not reach the bottom, his disciples of the next generation will. The members of this school fail to distinguish between the ground and the condition of forgiveness and the new birth. Repentance and faith are the proper and essential *conditions*, but repentance can never be a sufficient *ground*, or any ground at all, for forgiveness and the new birth. Repentance is a sufficient ground of forgiveness in any family government, but not in the Divine moral government. Anyone needing to be convinced of this is referred to Dr. Miley (35: 78-89). To rectify all the errors growing out of the teaching of the universal Fatherhood of God, would require a rewriting of an entire system of theology. That is not the province of this book, but rather to point out the

inevitable tendencies of this unscriptural doctrine.

If the Bible makes anything clear, it is this, that sinful man can secure forgiveness and the renewal of his nature only on the ground of Christ's atoning death; that we are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood, to show His righteousness because of the passing over of sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God;" that "apart from shedding of blood there is no remission," that we are "redeemed with the precious blood, even the blood of Christ," "in whom we have our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace;" that His blood was "poured out for many unto the remission of sins;" that it is "the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish unto God," that cleanses the "conscience from

dead works to serve the living God ;” that only “the blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin,” and that our eternal doxology will therefore be, “Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His Blood.”<sup>1</sup> These passages, in harmony with the whole of revelation, teach that forgiveness and regeneration or the new birth, are grounded only in Christ’s atoning sacrifice.

But forgiveness and the new birth are the conditions, without which there can be no filial nature and no filial relationship to God (pp. 93-98). Therefore sonship is not by nature, but by grace, not from creation, but from the new creation, not inherited from Adam, who forfeited his sonship (pp. 153-155) and received it back only as a gift of grace which he could not transmit, but received through Christ, who freely gives to those who are “aliens,” “foreigners,” and “not sons,” the privi-

Sonship not by nature, but by grace through Christ

<sup>1</sup>Rom. 3: 24, 25; Heb. 9: 22; 1 Pet. 1: 18, 19; Eph. 1: 7; Matt. 26: 28; Heb. 9: 14; 1 Jno. 1: 7; Rev. 1: 5.

lege, power, and "right to become children of God." Hence the doctrine of the uni-

versal Divine Fatherhood is  
Universalism falls false, and the whole system of Universalism, which is builded upon it, is therefore without foundation, and falls of its own weight. Hereby also it is seen plainly that this doctrine, which is the logical basis, the major premise of that gigantic delusion, so far from bringing any "larger hope" to humanity, is truly

*(d) A Most Cruel Deception*

The all-important question is not concerning what we would like to believe, nor

Not "broad-  
 ness," but truth  
 is essential what we wish could be true,  
 but rather, what is true?

The essential thing for us, in the face of such tremendous questions, is not that we shall be "broad," but that we shall be right and true. It is folly to set up "our instincts," "the voice of the heart," and our baseless "probabilities" against God's revealed Word. The time may come

when we shall be able to see that He knows and does what is best. Though we cannot understand all the details now, we can understand enough to enable us to see that what is revealed is at least in harmony with the highest reason. We can, therefore, afford not to pretend to be wise above what is written.

The doctrine in question solves no problems. Those which we have found it attempting to solve, it leaves in a state of jumbled inconsistencies with Scripture and common sense. It does no better in its attempt to relieve the difficulty of placing a limit upon God's power, and of reconciling free will with the impossibility of Divine defeat. Dr. Bradford thinks that "to assert positively that any will be able to defeat His redemptive purpose is to affirm that God's power is limited" (2: 253). But to "admit the possibility," though he "doubts the probability," is to allow the same limitation (2: 267). If he would discard his doc-

Solves no  
problems

trine of the universal Fatherhood and his consequent Universalism, and hold to the Scriptural idea of God's "redemptive purpose," not that all men inevitably shall be saved because they are sons, but that all who receive Christ shall have the right to become sons and therefore heirs of salvation, his difficulty about limiting God's power would vanish.

On the ground that God is a universal Father, Dr. Fairbairn logically concludes that He will never cease His efforts at salvation "till the evil ceases; and if evil never ceases, then the conflict must go on forever;" otherwise "the victory [would] remain with the evil" (7: 463-468). But if the conflict was eternally unsuccessful, and the evil had not ceased, "who would be the victor—God or sin" (7: 466)? And so his interpreting doctrine leaves him impaled on the horns of this dilemma: he must adopt the conclusion of Universalism, which he does not do (7: 468), or allow that sin is the victor, the very result



which he seeks to avoid. This is the very condition of a father with an incorrigible son; but it is not the condition of a ruler with an incorrigible, but convicted and punished subject. God is the victorious Sovereign of His universe, whether that sovereignty is manifested in granting sonship and its consequent inheritance to those who accept His terms, or in shutting the incorrigible out from the presence of God and all holy men and angels forever.

This doctrine leads the sinner with all reason to say: "God is the Father of all men, I am therefore His son. To infatuation  
cruel and  
deceptive And if His son, then a partaker of His nature, in need of no new birth either to create in me the Divine nature or to make me a child. Because I am a son, I belong to the Divine family, and am under God's parental care. He will therefore not punish, but only chasten and discipline me, in order to lead me to repentance and perfect me as His child. Sometime this result will be accomplished;

## 126 A Doctrine None Can Afford to Hold

for I am a son of God, and, if a son, then an heir of God." Now, if the first statement be true—that God is the Father of all men—"then," says Bishop Merrill, "this carnal reasoning is not only safe, but sound and truly rational. But if there be truth in God's Word; if there was any occasion for the redeeming work which the Messiah undertook, and any necessity for the spiritual birth of the soul unto newness of life in Christ,—then all this leaning upon the paternal government by unregenerate sinners is an infatuation as cruel as it is deceptive. It is the masterpiece of Satan" (19: 153).

A doctrine  
none can afford  
to hold

A doctrine which has no foundation in Scripture, which is fundamental in systems that proclaim "another gospel," which is grounded in no necessity of nature or reason or grace, that finds no consistent place in any evangelical system of truth, and involves the most irrational, not to say blasphemous, absurdities, and above all, which,

with inevitable logic, as we have just seen, leads to such an eternally fatal infatuation—such a doctrine none, who bears the interests of souls upon his heart, can afford to believe, much less to teach.

#### D.—SONSHIP IS ALIENABLE

The really final test of any doctrine is the Scriptural. Reserving for the present our consideration of the appeal to that court, but anticipating the decision, we have seen that this decision is in harmony with the highest reason. But the objection is made that the whole argument, while otherwise leading to a satisfactory conclusion and acceptable doctrine, involves an impossibility, and thereby is vitiated.

Milton, as already noted, puts these words into the mouth of Satan:

“The son of God I also am, or was;  
And if I was, I am; relation stands.”

All succeeding advocates of the universal Fatherhood necessarily have held to this

principle: "Once a son, always a son."

The determin-  
ing question

One advocate of the limited and conditional Fatherhood builds his argument on the same basis—Dr. Candlish in his Cunningham lectures. His Calvinistic doctrine of final perseverance led him to deny sonship to Adam before the Fall, and to teach that "the peculiar benefit of sonship" is this, that "it puts an end conclusively to probation, in every sense, and in every form" (32: 113, 254). This was a fatal weakness in his lectures, which exposed him to the easy assault of his opponent, Dr. Crawford, who, though of the same school, yet in utter disregard of consistency with his own fundamental doctrines, utterly demolished the arguments of Dr. Candlish, on the original relationship of Adam (18: 36-48). Here, then, is the vital question: If I was once a son of God, must I always be His son? Does this relationship necessarily stand? Can the relation of sonship in the Divine family,

once formed, be forfeited? Has this relationship in any case ever been forfeited?

That the filial relationship in the Divine family can be forfeited, is seen from its nature. The prodigal son of the parable continued to be a Not a natural  
or physical  
relationship son even during his unfilial life in the far country, because his sonship was an indestructible physical relationship; it originated in a physical procreation and birth. His filial relations might be, and were, interrupted by his character and conduct; but nothing could make it possible that he should forfeit his filial relationship. But sonship in the Divine family is not a parallel case. There is nothing of the physical or natural about it. It does not proceed from any physical creation or procreation or generation. The term, "natural sonship," used by Dr. Clarke, is therefore without any proper significance. The nonforfeitable character of natural physical human sonship has no bearing upon the question before us.

## 130 A Moral and Spiritual Relationship

Dr. Fairbairn acknowledges "The filial is an ethical even more than a physical relation" (7: 474). In the preceding paragraph he had said: "In fact and through sin God and man are ethical opposites." But, if "the filial is an ethical relation," and if "God and man are ethical opposites," how can God be the universal Father of mankind and every man God's son, when, according to this author's own definition, which is certainly correct, "to be a son is to be the image of the father, no mere instrument of his will, but a repetition of himself, constituted after him in nature and faculty" (7: 456, 457)? Is the Devil such an "image" and "repetition" of God that he could say truthfully what Milton attributes to him? Is the unregenerate sinner, whose "affinity and relation" to God, even Dr. Fairbairn is constrained to allow are *only* "ideal, as conceived and purposed of God—not actual, as manifested in man and realized in history"

(7: 474), such an "image" and "repetition" of Deity, that he must be considered a son? If sonship in the Divine family is in any sense "a physical relation," which Dr. Fairbairn allows—for he holds to the idea of a universal Fatherhood—then both of the foregoing hypotheses must be admitted as facts, and the position that man's "affinity and relation" to God are only "ideal, not actual," must be abandoned; for if a man is a son, he is an "actual" son, though he be far from an "ideal" son. But if sonship is not natural or physical, as we have seen is the case, but only a moral and spiritual relationship, then the idea of the universal Fatherhood vanishes as a vain imagination, then too we are rid of the inconsistency between the fact of sonship and Dr. Fairbairn's correct definition of what it means "to be a son," and of the absurd, but otherwise true foregoing hypotheses.

It would seem to be unnecessary to argue that this relationship between God

## 132 A Moral and Spiritual Relationship

and man is purely moral and spiritual and not in any sense natural or physical. But if such were the case, it also would be unnecessary to oppose the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood; for this rests purely on a physical basis, except in the thought of those who deny man's native depravity. A few moments of earnest attention to this one phase of the problem, however, ought to be sufficient to enable anyone to see that there is no ground for a physical relationship between God and man. A rereading of pages 51-55 will assist in this direction. There is no analogy that can be used perfectly to illustrate the case before us. That of the relation of the Eternal Son to the Father will not quite do, and yet that is the most perfect type of our filial relation to God. It is in no sense a physical, but only a spiritual, relationship. The closest earthly relationship is the conjugal. "The two shall become one flesh" (Matt. 19: 5). This last word does not make inconsistent the state-



ment that this relationship is purely spiritual. But, though this is the most sacred and intimate of all earthly relations, yet conditions may arise which morally and legally will abrogate the relation utterly and cause those who were one to become two, as if they never had been united by the closest affinity. Now, while the relation of sonship is something entirely different, still the analogy of a true conjugal spiritual union may help some minds at least to grasp this fact that our filial relation to the Divine is not physical but spiritual and subject to conditions which may lead to its nullification.

Believers in the universal Fatherhood always confuse the condition of man growing out of his original creation with the present condition of him who does not choose to accept the proffered blessing and relationship. They ignore the fact that the moral and spiritual element of man's nature, which constituted his chief like-

A relationship  
based on God's  
grace and  
conditioned by  
man's freedom

## 134 Such Relationship May Be Forfeited

ness to the Divine, and which was the basis without which the filial relation and fellowship could not exist, has been changed so fundamentally by sin, that now the element of atoning grace must be taken into account as the only sufficient basis of the paternal and filial relation between God and man, as we have seen (pp. 59-65). But if sonship is grounded in the Atonement, it is a gift of grace and not an inevitable result of nature, involves a renewed nature which can be produced only by the new birth, and if the new birth can be received only by a free choice of repentance and faith, then sonship is both based on God's grace and conditioned by man's freedom, and the crowning glory of man's free will is, that he is privileged to choose his own spiritual affiliation.

What follows? Because man's filial relationship to God is in no sense physical, but purely moral and spiritual, based on God's grace and conditioned by man's free choice,

Such relationship may be forfeited

therefore it may be forfeited; for that which is of grace may cease when the conditions of receiving or retaining gracious gifts are not complied with. If our initial entrance into the kingdom and family of God at our natural birth is not the result of that physical birth, but of an unconditional spiritual operation—and if this is not true, then children are made sons and heirs of salvation on some other ground than Christ's Atonement—that relationship may cease, when, at the age of accountability, the now responsible child chooses to terminate it. And whatever may be anyone's views of the relation of children to the Divine family, if, as has been demonstrated abundantly, the sonship of the adult is a gracious relationship bestowed on conditions, then, when the conditions are not complied with, the sonship ceases. Even Wendt seems to acknowledge this. "Man becomes a child of God," he says, "by showing conduct corresponding to the character and will of

## 136 Such Relationship May Be Forfeited

God. . . . Then the idea is warranted, that one can, by his own responsible conduct, *make* himself the child of a certain father, or can *lose* a certain filial relationship" (14: 116, 117). Since he had just been contrasting "a child of the Devil" with children of God, this would seem to be a fair interpretation of his words, though his views on this subject seem to depend entirely upon the passage of Scripture that he happens to be considering.

But, says Dr. Fairbairn, "He (God) will not dissolve the relations through which alone He can work the beatitude He has willed; were He to do so, He would cancel the very end for which He has made the world" (7: 421). But the individual, by sin, may dissolve those relations and cancel that end for himself. Our author adds: "The creative will as a will of moral good is eternal and universal." But all men will not allow its designed effects in themselves to be "eternal

and universal." Sin, as he confesses, does indeed cause both man and God to miss his mark; for sin "is, as it were, the creature attempting to deny to the Creator the beatitude he was created expressly to give. . . . And it is in its nature so malignant that it may forever divide God from the spirits He created that He might enjoy their society forever" (7: 455). And if sin can thus cause man to lose his Divine inheritance, it must first cause a loss of his sonship; for sonship as long as it exists guarantees the inheritance—"if a son, then an heir through God."

In the summary of the principle upon which his discussions have proceeded, Dr. Fairbairn makes certain statements which should be considered in this connection (7: 445, 446). "Fatherhood," he says, "cannot here be stated in the terms of physical creation or procreation, . . . but only in the terms of ethical motive, relation, and end." These paternal and

### 138 Such Relationship May Be Forfeited

filial relations are "spiritual and personal." This being true, "the aboriginal relation of man and God" is not, as he asserts, necessarily "the universal and permanent"—indeed, it cannot so continue when the spiritual character of man ceases to be of the character of the Father, when man, in the exercise of his free will, chooses to nullify "the ethical relation and end" which God desires to have realized. "Man is God's son . . . because of the God and the ends of the God whose creature he is." But also because of what man is as a free moral agent, when that freedom is used to abrogate his Divine relationship, his sonship ceases. It is true that where love "creates a fellow with whom it can have fellowship, the relation of the created is filial." But it is also true, in the case of a purely gracious and moral and spiritual filial relationship, that where sin breaks that fellowship and removes the likeness which must exist between parent and child, the filial relationship ceases,

and the creature becomes an enemy, an alien, a traitor. "To speak of the 'adoption' of a creature who is in no respect a son, is to use a term which is here without the saving virtue of sense. The Sonship must be real to start with, if adoption is ever to be real." It strikes us rather that to speak of the "adoption" of a creature who is in reality already a son, "is to use a term which is here without the saving virtue of sense," even when the author adds that he means "adoption out of the sonship of nature into the Sonship of grace" (7: 477); for no father adopts his own child, nor does it require a second birth for one who is already a son to become a son. If one is a son by nature, he has a perfect title to sonship, without asking any adoptive favors of grace. The trouble seems to be that in all his effort to establish the universal Fatherhood of God and sonship of man, Dr. Fairbairn ignores the relation of the new birth to the filial relationship and speaks only of adoption

## 140 Such Relationship May Be Forfeited

as a "legal fiction," without reference to its deeper Scriptural significance in the new birth. But the fact remains that birth always has had a very vital connection with the bringing into existence of a child; and in the spiritual realm the connection is no less vital—there is no filial relationship of man to God, except man shall be born of God. This is the element which Dr. Fairbairn needs, to make the sonship and the adoption real, and not a universal physical sonship, a conception which, on its face, is an absurdity in the spiritual realm.

It may help some to understand the fact that in our probationary state this relationship is forfeitable, by noting the only possible alternatives to the idea of a forfeitable spiritual sonship. First, Dr. R. S. Candlish's idea that no one is ever a son till the experience of the new birth and adoption, and that this sonship, once entered into, is nonforfeitable on the principle of the Calvinistic doctrine of final



perseverance. The proof of man's original sonship or the disproof of this Calvinistic dogma, is the disproof of this alternative. Secondly, a natural universal sonship which is the guarantee of universal salvation. The disproof of Universalism is the disproof of this alternative. Thirdly, Dr. Crawford's notion of a nominal universal sonship, which amounts to nothing more than the relation of the creature to the Creator. But such a sonship as this, which bears no vital relation to salvation, is only a misapplication of the term, and is without foundation in Scripture or the nature of things, and hence this alternative is disposed of. This leaves room only for the Scriptural and rational doctrine of a nonphysical, purely moral and spiritual sonship, based on God's grace, not on nature, and conditioned by man's freedom, which, therefore, can be forfeited, and, in fact, has been forfeited.

Even *The Theology of an Evolutionist*,

## 142 Filial Likeness of Nature Forfeited

though maintaining the universal Father-  
Filial likeness  
of nature  
forfeited hood in utter inconsistency  
with this confession, declares: "We are made in God's image,  
and have despoiled ourselves of that  
image" (16: 75). But that image is es-  
sential to sonship. "That which is begot-  
ten must have the nature of that of which  
it is begotten" (26: 216). "Identity of  
nature between parent and child is essen-  
tial to the idea of fatherhood" (2: 59).  
Now, when this likeness of nature is not  
something physical and is not dependent  
upon anything physical, but pertains only  
to the moral and spiritual character of the  
soul or spirit, if we "despoil ourselves of  
that image," we despoil ourselves of son-  
ship, which requires "identity of nature  
between parent and child." Says Mr.  
Nye, "He has fashioned us after His own  
heart" (4: 19). But only a Universalist  
and his kind would think of saying that  
this applies to us as we have made our-  
selves by the choice of sin. Those bear no

filial resemblance to God, of whom He says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt" (Jer. 17: 9); "We are all become as one that is unclean, and all our righteousnesses are as a polluted garment" (Is. 64: 6); "O full of all guile and all villainy, thou son of the Devil, thou enemy of all righteousness" (Acts 13: 10). Sin is indeed a great "offense against the paternal love, . . . for it defeats all the motives and intentions of the eternal goodness" (7: 463). But what is one of the chief of those "intentions"? This: that we shall have "the right to become children of God," "that we might receive the adoption of sons." And sin defeats that intention, abrogating the relation of sonship on the part of the sinner, though, of course, "it can annihilate neither the Fatherhood nor the Sovereignty;" for God is always Sovereign, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and of all who obey Him. The reason that Dr. Fair-

bairn assigns for sin's inability to annihilate the Fatherhood and Sovereignty is, that "it cannot annul either the character or the acts through which they are." He refers to the character and acts of God. But the one thing and the very thing that sin does, is this, that it does annul the character in man which is essential in order to constitute him a son of God, and thereby, while it cannot annul "the acts," it does nullify the results of those acts through which God has become the Father of that particular man; and consequently, while God is forever the Father, He is not the Father of that man who does not bear His image and character. This is in harmony with Biblical teaching and with the doctrine of the Apostles as expressed by Dr. McClintock. The Apostles, he says, seem to have before them this single view, "that our sins had deprived us of our sonship" (21:78).

If the principle of the whole argument up to this point is true—that when God

creates moral intelligences, human or angelic, He begets in them a moral and spiritual likeness

Examples of  
forfeited  
sonship

to Himself which constitutes them children in His family, and that, by sin, these free personalities can despoil themselves of that likeness and hence of their sonship—then the Israelites who “dealt corruptly with Him,” and of whom it is added, “they are not His children” (Deut. 32: 5), and the “angels that kept not their own principality” (Jude 6), which must have been a position of sonship as well as lordship, are examples of forfeited filial relationship. And what we shall find to be a fact of Scripture, is supported by the common experience of mankind, and especially of the most spiritual; namely, that the man with a deep sense of his sins does not think of addressing God as Father, but cries, “God, be merciful to me a sinner,” and only changes his form of address after he has been born again into the family of God, and received the Spirit

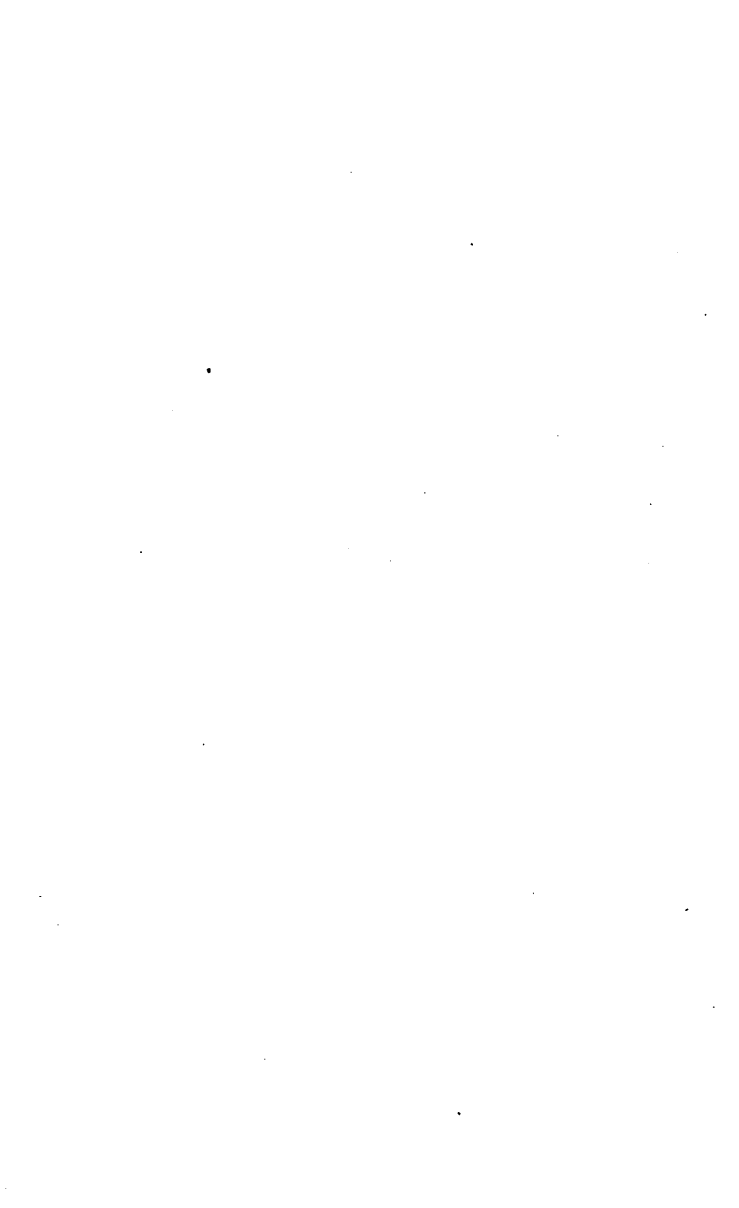
of adoption as the distinguishing and witnessing fact of sonship.

We agree most heartily with Dr. Clarke in affirming, "The filial life, such as Christ tells of, is the only normal life of man" (1: 143). And if it were possible that the desires and intentions of Divine love were the only elements to be considered and could determine man's character, life, and relationship, not only would Fatherhood and sonship express the normal relation between God and man, but the normal life of sonship would be the actual and universal life of all men, and not simply the "ideal as conceived and purposed of God." But unfortunately the ideal and normal are not always the actual.

Says Dr. Fairbairn, "God is by nature Father, and man is by nature son; and of these two the normal relation is one of communion or fellowship. But the normal is not the actual;

Sin causes an abnormal relationship

its realization is hindered by sin" (7: 452). If it had not been for his false hypothesis of the universal Fatherhood, which has marred his great book so seriously, instead of the foregoing statement, he doubtless would have made this true declaration: The normal relation of God to man is that of fatherhood, and of man to God is that of sonship. But the normal is not universally the actual; its universal realization is hindered by sin.





**PART II**  
**THE TEACHING OF**  
**SCRIPTURE**



## **PART II**

### **THE TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE**

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MANY references already have been made to the Holy Scriptures, but only such as were necessarily incident to a proper consideration of the various theories and dangerous tendencies of the view that God is a universal Father. It remains for us to examine the teaching of the Bible as a whole, in order to lay a sure foundation upon which to construct the true doctrine of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Emphasis needs to be laid upon the importance of such a view of the whole Book in any attempt to determine the real teaching of the Word. Single passages, wrested from their context, and considered without re-

## 152 Man Created in the Image of God

gard to the general tenor of the Scriptures, may be made to teach almost any vagary of a wild imagination. But such methods ought to find no toleration from a sincere searcher after truth. It shall be our purpose to make a sufficiently thorough investigation of every part of the Holy Scriptures relevant to our theme, to determine what is the teaching, first of the Old Testament, second of the words of Jesus, and thirdly of the Apostolic writings, touching the subject of the Fatherhood of God, especially in answer to the question at issue, whether that Fatherhood is natural and universal, or moral and spiritual and therefore limited.

### A.—THE OLD TESTAMENT

Starting where we first find him, we learn that man was created in the image  
Man created in  
the image of  
God and after the likeness of God  
(Gen. 1: 26). This image consisted essentially in man's personality, and in so far was not forfeitable and was

not lost by sin. But there may be, and in fact are, two kinds of persons—holy and unholy—and these are distinct in nature. A pure moral personality is a partaker of the Divine nature, in virtue of a spiritual endowment, a spiritual begetting. This was man's original condition, and this it was which constituted him a child of God. But this pure and Divine-like character of his personality was forfeitable, and was lost in the Fall.

His filial nature  
lost by sin

This view is in harmony with Genesis 9: 6 (compare Jas. 3: 9), which makes the fact of man's *personal* dignity and possibilities—the fact that he was made in the image of God—the ground of a prohibition against murder; and with Colossians 3: 10 and Ephesians 4: 23, 24, which show that “the new man” is a restoration of a Divine image of “righteousness and holiness of truth” which had been lost, and which could be restored only by renewal in the image of the Creator.

## 154 His Filial Nature Lost by Sin

This Scriptural analysis of the nature of the image and likeness in which man was created, disposes of the claim of Dr. Adams, that, "whatever may have been the nature of this image and likeness of God, it is clear that it was not lost in the sin of our progenitor," and his further claim that Genesis 9: 6 is "an impregnable text" "fatal to all that false view" which disputes the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God (3: 8, 9). "The nature of this image" makes a vast difference. Originally characterized by the fullness of the Divine image not only in the personal, but also in the moral elements of that image, Adam was constituted a "son of God" (Luke 3: 38). But when the moral element of that image, which is essential to sonship in the Divine family,<sup>1</sup> was lost, the "relation of sonship was lost," says Bishop Merrill (19: 143), "and was never transmitted by natural generation to any of his offspring, and cannot now

<sup>1</sup> See, in addition to the foregoing analysis, pages 127-147 and 239-243.

be pleaded as the ground of heirship;" for of the children of Adam it is said, that he begat them "in his own likeness, after his image" (Gen. 5: 3), and that image was no longer of a sufficient likeness to God to constitute the son of Adam a son of God. Henceforth man must look back, not to the original creation, nor to his own individual physical birth, as the ground of his actual or possible Divine filiation, but forward rather to some provision of grace intimated in the prophecy that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head (Gen. 3: 15).

If it should be objected that this statement is based on the doctrine of the Fall, which doctrine has been shown to be founded on a myth and not on reliable history, and that, therefore, the argument falls to the ground, and is also inconsistent with evolution; it might be answered, *first*, that with such an objector there is a necessity for a reexamination of the question of the historical authority of Genesis

## 156 Two Classes of Men Since the Fall

and the doctrine of the Bible concerning the Fall of man; *secondly*, that, on the ground of naturalistic or atheistic evolution, there is no basis for any relationship of man to God that does not inhere equally in any of man's animal progenitors; *thirdly*, that, even on the basis of theistic evolution and a denial of the Fall, there is no basis for any *filial* relation of man to God, until, in the process of his individual development, man has received that moral and spiritual endowment which makes him a partaker of the Divine nature, and which can never result from anything other than a production from God of the moral, spiritual, and Divine life in man.

As a result of the first apostasy we find that a change has taken place in man's relationship to God, that mankind is now divided into two classes, called in Genesis 3: 15 the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman; and in Genesis 6: 2 we find these further

Two classes of  
men since the  
Fall



characterized as "the daughters of men" and "the sons of God." In the first passage, the seed of the serpent must refer to those members of the human family who follow the ways and partake of the nature of the serpent as his children, and the seed of the woman are those who follow her in repentance and regeneration, being born again from above, and especially to Jesus Christ who is preeminently "the seed" (Gal. 3: 16, 19; 4: 4). In the second passage, "the sons of God" are those who, by their choice of God as their Father, have had restored to them the forfeited moral image lost by sin, and "the daughters of men" are those who have made no such choice and in consequence are, as Dr. Murphy says, "destitute of the loftier qualities of like-mindedness with God." "The evil here described," he adds, "is that of promiscuous intermarriage, without regard to spiritual character."<sup>1</sup> From now on the inspired record deals with two dis-

<sup>1</sup> Murphy, *Commentary on Genesis*, in loco, pp. 177. 178.

tinct classes of men, "the seed of the serpent" and "the sons of God."

Upon the organization of the Hebrew nation, the prevailing notion of the Old

Testament concerning the  
 The Hebrews as a nation called children of God      Fatherhood of God comes into view for the first time:

namely, that it is a special relation existing between God and His people Israel. Jehovah says unto Pharaoh: "Israel is my son, my firstborn. Let my son go, that he may serve me; and thou hast refused to let him go; behold, I will slay thy son, thy firstborn" (Ex. 4: 22, 23). All the passages in Deuteronomy,<sup>1</sup> Isaiah,<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah,<sup>3</sup> and Malachi<sup>4</sup> produced in support of the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood, refer only to the fatherly relation of God to *Israel as a nation*, and not even to individual Israelites, to say nothing of all the rest of mankind. Moses (as also the others) is speaking only of

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 14: 1, 2; 32: 6, 10, 15, 18-20.

<sup>2</sup> Is. 1: 2; 63: 16; 64: 8.

<sup>3</sup> Jer. 3: 4, 19; 31: 1, 9, 20.

<sup>4</sup> Mal. 1: 6; 2: 9, 10.

## The Prevailing Old Testament Idea 159

and to Israel, and what he says of God as a Father having bought, made, and established them, refers, not to any natural relationship growing out of creation, but only to the fact that God has delivered, made, and established them *as a nation*. And, indeed, this very thirty-second chapter from Deuteronomy furnishes a positive argument against the idea of a universal Divine Fatherhood, when it intimates in verse 5 that sonship depends upon character: "They have dealt corruptly with him, they are not his children, it is their blemish; they are a perverse and crooked generation." And verse 21 seems to teach that sin may cause them to forfeit their filial relationship and that God may adopt other children in their stead. Jeremiah (31:9) gives the key to the interpretation of the prevailing Old Testament idea touching the Fatherhood of God: "I am a Father to Israel."

The principal passage in the Old Testa-

ment, upon which the advocates of the doctrine in question rest their claim, is Malachi 2: 10. Malachi 2: 10 "Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?" Of this text, Dr. Adams, the Universalist, says: "It shows beyond question that in the mind of this prophet the Fatherhood of God was coextensive with His creatorship over souls" (3: 10, 11). And, on the other hand, Professor James S. Candlish says (10: 217<sup>1</sup>): "Here plainly the Fatherhood is not conceived as extending to all men." Which is right? Evidently the latter. Why? The prophet is a Jew, possessed of the prevailing Old Testament idea of the Fatherhood as a national rather than an individual relation, and he is speaking only of and to Jews. He makes this relationship of the Jewish nation to God the basis of his rebuke to them for marrying heathen wives: "Judah hath profaned the holiness of Jehovah, . . . and hath married the daughter of a foreign god"

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(v. 11). The argument of the prophet would be without force or point, if the interpretation of the Universalist were correct.

Beyschlag confesses that even such fervent passages as Isaiah 63: 16 and Jeremiah 31: 20 "refer not so much to a personal relation of God to the individual, as His gracious relation to the nation as such" (11: 81). Nevertheless the idea of a personal sonship does seem to be shadowed forth in a few passages of the Old Testament. In 1 Chronicles 17: 13, speaking of Solomon, God says: "I will be his Father, and he shall be my son." And in Psalm 89: 26 it is said that David, but only as a type of the one truly Firstborn, shall cry, "Thou art my Father, my God." But such an idea is very rare, and is connected only with those in official and typical relations,<sup>1</sup> so that Wendt (13: 187, 188) says truly, "The name of Father was by no

Intimations of  
individual  
sonship

<sup>1</sup> See also Ps. 82: 6. compare John 10: 34. 35.

## 162 A Divine Family, and Fatherly Nature

means the customary and prevalent designation of God by the Israelites. Nowhere in the Psalms, which were the most direct expressions of reverence to God as taught in the Old Testament, was God addressed as Father of the people of Israel or of individual Israelites." God is called King, and his people servants of God (Ps. 5:2; 19:11, 13).

But while the individual invocation of God as Father is absent from the Old Testament (26:94), the A Divine family, and fatherly nature ideas of a Divine family, and of a fatherly nature in God, are not altogether wanting. In that family the angels appear as the sons of God (Job 38:7; Ps. 29:1; 89:6). The fatherly nature is indicated in such tender expressions as these: "A Father of the fatherless . . . is God" (Ps. 68:5). "Like as a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear him" (Ps. 103:13). While these passages beautifully express the thought that God stands in such an

## Prophetic Glimpses of Personal Sonship 163

attitude of loving helpfulness toward the needy as we are in the habit of ascribing to the spirit of a true father, they are very far from teaching that God is the actual Father of all men.

The prophets, however, begin to catch glimpses of the day when the Divine Fatherhood no longer shall be considered as being based on Prophecies of a gracious personal sonship a peculiar relation to any nation as such, but only on spiritual and moral conditions, when many, who had been considered sons because of their nationality, shall lose their sonship by wickedness (Is. 49: 20, 21), and Gentiles shall be adopted in their place (Is. 49: 20-23; 65: 1; 66: 19-21). Says Wendt (13: 187): "The realization of the ideal religious relationship between Jehovah and the people in the longed-for latter day was indicated by the fact that the people should be called the 'sons of the living God' (Hos. 1: 10), and that God should be called by them 'my Father' (Jer. 3: 19)." But this is not to

be on the ground of nature or creation, but of redemption and grace. "Thou, Jehovah, art our Father; our Redeemer from everlasting is thy name" (Is. 63: 16).

The teaching of the Old Testament on this subject may be summarized thus:

Summary of  
Old Testament  
teaching

(1) Adam was constituted originally a son of God in possession of the full image of the pure moral Divine Personality. This is partly taken from the New Testament declaration, but is all implied in the Old Testament history. (2) As a consequence of the alienation by sin, the relation of sonship was lost, and has never been transmitted by natural generation to any of Adam's offspring, who have been begotten, not in the image of God, but in the image of fallen Adam, and mankind since has been divided into two classes: "the seed of the serpent," and "the sons of God." (3) The Hebrews *as a nation* were called the children of Jehovah, in virtue



of their national election to be a peculiar people (Deut. 14: 1, 2). This is the dominant idea of the Fatherhood in the Old Testament: namely, that it is a national and not an individual relationship. "It is nowhere," says Dr. Westcott, "extended to men generally," and Gentiles can participate in it only "by incorporation in the chosen family" (30: 27).

(4) There are minor intimations that this filial relationship may also be individual.

(5) Still in the Old Testament God is not addressed personally as Father, even in the Psalms, though there is a recognition of a heavenly Divine family, and a very tender fatherly affection in God. (6) But the day is anticipated when sonship and Fatherhood shall be dependent upon likeness of moral character between Father and son, when all men individually may become the sons of God, without regard to their nationality. (7) In that day this relationship will be grounded, not in creation, but in redemption.

## B.—THE DOCTRINE TAUGHT BY JESUS

Applying the test—What does Jesus say about it?—we find an advance so

marked as to amount almost  
A new concep-  
tion of God to a new revelation, not, in-

deed, of a new nature, but of the new normal conception of God. The fatherly nature of God, which found only occasional and general expression in the Old Testament, is declared by Jesus to be “the normal and standard conception of the Divine Character” (13: 184). Says Dr. Sanday (25: 618<sup>2</sup>): “The name ‘Father’ becomes in the New Testament what the name Jehovah was in the Old Testament, the fullest embodiment of revelation.”

(So also Bruce, 28: 109.)

For Jesus, the natural name of God was Father. He was conscious of sustaining

the individual personal rela-  
Father, the  
natural name  
with Jesus tion of sonship to God, and of living in such loving familiarity with the eternal and holy One as exists only in

## Provides That All May Be Children 167

an ideal relation between father and son. Hence His fitness to raise His followers' thought of God from that of the judicial and kingly relation to that of the paternal. Being Himself in such a unique sense the Son of God, that He never associates Himself with any other in addressing God as Our Father, He has devoted Himself in word, life, death, resurrection, and continued intercession to the one work of providing and teaching that all men, in Him, may address God directly and personally as Father, and of persuading them to accept this privilege. To this end He made the idea of the paternal love of God the foundation of His proclamation of the kingdom. The opening words of our model prayer take us to a height of holy and exalted intimacy with God never before attained, even in the most highly devotional strains of the Psalms. So full is His revelation of the Divine Fatherhood, and so

Provides that  
all may be  
children

often is this name upon His lips, that many have made

(a) *The Claim That Jesus Teaches the Universal Fatherhood of God*

Dr. William Newton Clarke sets up this claim, but makes little use of Scripture in substantiation of his position.

W. N. Clarke

In the few citations which he makes from the words of Jesus<sup>1</sup> the reference in every case is plainly to the truly spiritual children of God, and not to all men in general regardless of character or attitude toward God; and he carefully avoids all reference to those passages clearly inconsistent with his doctrine (1: 131).

Professor Bruce affirms that "Jesus said: God is the Father of men, sin notwithstanding. He said this not merely with reference to the best men, . . . but even with reference to the most depraved and degraded"

Bruce

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 5: 4; 6: 6, 32; 7: 11; 26: 39; Luke 11: 2.

(9: 110). It is unfortunate that Dr. Bruce does not deign to refer his readers to so much as one single Scriptural expression in proof of this bold and wholly gratuitous declaration. This is the more remarkable, inasmuch as he does not thus treat the other doctrines of the Kingdom. He says that he finds in Christ's behavior toward men, more than in His teaching, the proof of the universal Fatherhood, that His "deeds more emphatically than the most pathetic and beautiful words . . . said to all who could understand: 'The most depraved of men is still a man, my brother, my Father's child; therefore I love him, and am fully assured that God loves him as I do' " (9: 113). Would not those "who could understand" rather interpret the deeds of Jesus, *in harmony with His words*, as saying: "The most depraved of men is still a man, who may become and ought to be my brother, my Father's child; therefore because of this possibility in manhood, God so loves him

that He gave His only Son that man might not perish, and I so love him that I freely give my life to redeem him from the power of Satan into the family of my Father."

Dr. Wendt says that Jesus proceeds upon the certainty that God is the Father

Wendt of all men, "as upon an undoubted axiom" (13: 199).

This position he attempts to prove by reference to the teachings of Jesus, not one of which, as we shall see, must bear such an interpretation. Unlike Clarke, Bruce, and others, however, Wendt also finds those passages which cannot be made to bear such an interpretation, and, on the basis of those teachings, regardless of the startling inconsistency with his former exegesis, he declares that "whoever conducts himself in opposition to the will of God, proves just on that account that he belongs merely to the world and does not participate in the true character of God, but is a child of the Devil" (17: 116,

117). Can it be that the Great Teacher ever taught concerning any being, at one and the same time, both that he is a child of the Devil, and that God is his Father!

Passing for the present his Biblical references, let us note the method of argument by which he proposes to reconcile the inconsistent teachings which he attributes to Jesus. Commenting upon Matthew 5: 44-48, he says, "God does not *become* the Father, but *is* the heavenly Father even of those who *become* His sons" (13: 193). Now, if God can *be* the Father of those who *are not* His sons, but *are* the children of the Devil, and must *become* the sons of God, then I suppose we must believe in the universal Fatherhood of God! And, with the same method of reasoning, we might believe in anything that happens to strike our fancy.

Again he says, "This idea (that God *is* the Father of those who *are not*, but must

*become*, His sons) would be inconceivable, if in the Fatherhood and sonship the mere relation of procreator and procreated were understood; for manifestly the Fatherhood of the one implies the existence of sonship in the other. But, for the consciousness of Jesus, it is not the relation of God to man as Creator which primarily is taken into account in His name of Father, but His unmerited, bountiful, forgiving love" (13: 193). It seems that this might be termed an inconceivable twist of a scholarly reason to make conceivable an inconceivable conception.

In the first place, it is to be noted that Dr. Wendt parts company with the otherwise apparently unanimous conclusion of all advocates of the universal Divine Fatherhood: namely, that this relation rests primarily upon "the relation of God to man as Creator." He says that this idea makes his notion inconceivable, that God is the Father of those who must yet *become* His sons. In this he is correct. But



he fails to see that whatever fact makes sonship conditional and therefore limited, must also logically make the corresponding Fatherhood conditional and therefore limited. He admits that sonship in the Divine family is not based on creation, but is conditioned on character and conduct, and says "that one can, by his own responsible conduct, *make* himself the child of a certain father, or can *lose* a certain filial relationship" (14: 116, 117). If he had seen, that, if some men are not the sons of God, then God is not the Father of all men, he would have been saved from attributing such inconsistency to the teachings of Jesus. Secondly, if the existence of the fatherly spirit in God of an "unmerited, bountiful, forgiving love," constitutes Fatherhood, then, indeed, the conclusion follows that God is the Father of all men; for the existence of such a spirit is beyond question. But Wendt might just as rationally call any kind, fatherly spirited man the father of all the

children in his neighborhood, though he never had but a single child of his own, as to call God, on any such ground as this, the actual Father of all men. The possession of the fatherly instinct does not constitute fatherhood in God or man. God is eternally "the Father"—that relation is an eternal relation in the Godhead; but He is not, on that account, the Father of those who have not yet become His sons.

Bishop Brooks taught that "Jesus came to restore the fact of God's Fatherhood to man's knowledge" (8: 12).

Brooks

But he comes nearer to the truth in saying that "He is the Redeemer of man into the Fatherhood of God" (8: 12), which means, if it means anything, that Jesus came to restore to man a forfeited sonship, so that he might know God as his Father. He says further that Jesus came "to tell men that they were, and to make them actually be, the sons of God" (8: 14). On the basis of the uni-

versal Fatherhood, which the good Bishop so strongly asserted, the two parts of this sentence are utterly irreconcilable; if men *are* the sons of God, it were absurd for Jesus to propose “to *make* them actually *be* the sons of God;” and it is equally illogical for him to say that “He is the truth, and whoever receives Him becomes the son of God” (8: 15); for if all men are always and inalienably the sons of God, on what basis can they be required to receive Christ in order to *become* sons of God? And yet, by some process, apparently incomprehensible, the Bishop thought that this necessity of becoming a son of God, taught in John 1: 12, to which he refers (8: 20), proves the doctrine of the actual universal Fatherhood.

Four passages from the words of Jesus are depended on by the advocates of this doctrine to establish their position: namely, Christ’s resurrection utterance to Mary (John 20: 17), the Lord’s Prayer, the Sermon

Proposed  
Gospel proofs

on the Mount, and the parable of the Prodigal Son.

To Mary Jesus said, "Go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God."

John 20: 17

This was spoken to an affectionate follower, and conveyed a message to be delivered to His "brethren," His disciples. It proves that Jesus considered His true disciples children of God, but it makes no reference whatever to anyone else.

Speaking of the invocation of the Lord's Prayer, the Universalist writer, Dr. Adams, asserts: "In those words the Savior of mankind thrust in upon our spiritual consciousness the solemn truth that we are by our very natures the children of God," and that "to try to limit the scope of that address . . . is a perversion of Scripture which is excusable only to the blindest prejudice" (3: 14, 15). On the other hand, the *Pulpit Commentary* (on Matt.

The Lord's  
Prayer

6: 9) says, "Christ places in the very forefront the primary importance of the recognition of spiritual relationship to God. There is no direct thought here of God as the All-Father in the modern and often deistic sense." Again, which is right? A study of the context, as is generally the case, will show that the Universalist is not right.

The occasion of the utterance of this model prayer, Luke tells us (Luke 11: 1, 2), was at the conclusion of one of the Master's special seasons of communion, when "one of His *disciples* said unto Him, Lord, teach *us* to pray, even as John also taught his disciples. And He said unto *them*, When ye pray, say, Father." This prayer was uttered first upon the request of a *disciple*, evidently when the few disciples were alone with their Lord; and it was taught to the *disciples*, no mention being made of any who were not disciples. And in Matthew (6: 5-9), Jesus makes a marked distinction between the hypocrites

and the heathen, on the one hand, and His disciples, on the other: "*They* love to stand and pray . . . in the corners of the streets," and *they* use "vain repetitions." "Be not therefore like unto *them*. . . . After this manner therefore pray *ye*: Our Father who art in heaven." The "ye" is properly emphatic in this passage, as it appears in the Greek; for Jesus, in this form of invocation, would not have us think of a physical relationship, which would belong equally to the lower order of animals, but He would have our thought raised to the glorious personal spiritual and intimate relationship of those who have been born of God, and who alone in any real sense can approach the throne of grace in those soul-inspiring words, "Our Father who art in heaven." Well has it been said that this prayer might with propriety be called "The Disciples' Prayer," rather than "The Lord's Prayer."

It is claimed that the keynote of the

Sermon on the Mount is the universal Fatherhood of God and the universal sonship of man

Sermon on the Mount

(3: 12). On the contrary, we believe that the evidence is overwhelmingly against this proposition, and that the Sermon rather unfolds the characteristics of heart and conduct which belong only to those who follow its precepts that they may be sons of their Father who is in heaven (Matt. 5: 45).

First, the Sermon is addressed primarily, not to the multitudes, but to the disciples. "And seeing the multitudes, He went up into the mountain; and when He had sat down, His *disciples* came unto Him: and He opened His mouth and taught *them*" (Matt. 5: 1, 2). And Luke (6: 20) says, "And He lifted up His eyes on His *disciples*, and said, Blessed are ye poor; for yours is the kingdom of God." The situation is analogous to that of a lawyer addressing a jury, while a large audience may hear and profit by all that is said.

Secondly, the exhortation of Matthew 5: 48, "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect," reaches such an exalted height of instruction in holiness as to imply that those to whom it is delivered have already made considerable progress in righteousness.

Thirdly, Jesus, in telling His disciples what they must do "that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5: 44, 45), directly implies that those who do not do these things can neither become nor remain sons of God.

Fourthly, the Beatitudes certainly do not describe the character of men in general, but rather the ideal character of true disciples. "Peacemakers," not their opposites, are "called sons of God."

Fifthly, two classes clearly are distinguished and contrasted all through the Sermon: Those who are "the light of the world," and "men" before whom this light is to shine (Matt. 5: 14, 16); those who are to "resist not him that is evil,"



and those who will "smite" them (v. 39); those who "persecute," and those who are persecuted (vv. 11, 44); "brethren," and "others" (v. 47); "hypocrites," and those who "seek first His kingdom" (6: 16, 33); those who only "say, Lord, Lord," and those who "do the will" of God (7: 21). To one of these classes, Jesus never speaks of God as their Father.

Sixthly, the expressions, "Ye are the salt of the earth," "Ye are the light of the world," "Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify *your* Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5: 13-16), can by no possible means be applied to any but those who have been born of God; and to this class alone, and not to the "men" before whom they are to let their light shine, does Jesus speak of God as "your Father."

This interpretation does not mean, as Dr. Adams asserts (3: 12), that this Sermon does not present a standard of character and life to which Jesus calls all men;

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but it does mean that this Sermon—so much lauded by men who do not understand it and who would rob the Gospel of all its distinctive life and power, and reduce it to a mere code of ethics for all men, already to be considered by their very nature in all their sins as the sons of God—contains the very heart of the Gospel; that it assumes a fundamental distinction between two classes of men, and that one of these classes only—the class that possesses the very salt of the Divine life and reflects the light of the Sun of Righteousness and seeks to be perfect as the Father in heaven—has the right to address God as “Our Father.”

The passage in the teachings of Jesus most generally and strenuously urged in  
Parable of the Prodigal Son proof of the doctrine that God is a universal Father, is the parable of the Prodigal Son. Dr. Beet says that “Paul never speaks of all men as the sons of God, but habitually uses language which excludes this idea,” and that

"in the New Testament the only exception to this usage is found in Luke 15: 11, 24, where, even in the far country, the prodigal remembers his father, and returning is recognized as his son" (34: 57, 58). This fact would seem to be a good reason for suspecting that the parable itself is no exception when rightly interpreted. And this we believe to be the case.

What was the purpose of the parable of the Prodigal Son? Was it to show that all men are prodigal sons, or even that they are sons at all? No more than it was the purpose of the preceding parables to show that all men are sheep or pieces of coin. Was it to teach that God is the Father of all men, or of any man? Just as much as it was the purpose of those other parables to teach that God is a Shepherd of real sheep or a woman hunting for a lost coin. What then was its purpose? That is revealed in the preliminary statement, narrating the events which gave

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rise to this and the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin. "Now all the publicans and sinners were drawing near unto Him to hear Him. And both the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" (Luke 15: 1, 2). The purpose of this exceedingly beautiful and touching parable is simply to exhibit and emphasize "the pardoning, bountiful grace of God vouchsafed to the sinner on condition of his penitent return" (13: 197, 198). Many things in the experience of a sinner may find illustration in this parable. But it is a fundamental principle in the interpretation of all parables that the details, which are essential only to the proper filling up of the narrative, must not be pressed into service to teach beyond the legitimate scope of the central thought that it is designed shall be imparted and made clear. And especially is this true, when such teachings are found to be an exception to, and a contradiction of, the

plain meaning of other passages of the Word.

For example, who would think of teaching from the parable of the Friend at Midnight (Luke 11: 5-8) the essential selfishness of God, and from that of the Unjust Judge (Luke 18: 1-8) the essential injustice of God, because the certainty of God's answer to prayer is compared to the selfish responses of these characters? But the basis for such teaching is exactly of the same kind as that supposed to be found in the parable of the Prodigal Son for the Fatherhood of God. Again, the resolution of the prodigal, "I will arise, and go to my father," was used by the Pelagians to prove that man could turn to God in his own strength without the grace of God assisting him.<sup>1</sup> And Unitarians and Universalists still urge the circumstance of the prodigal's return in support of their claim that repentance is a sufficient basis of forgiveness, without an

<sup>1</sup> Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, pp. 309, 310.

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atoning sacrifice, that "this parable precludes every idea of the necessity of vicarious suffering, in order to the pardon of the penitent sinner" (35: 87). The doctrine of the universal Fatherhood finds only this same kind of groundless support in this parable. Upon the subjects of Pelagianism, the Atonement, and the Fatherhood of God, the parable is equally silent, and their truth or falsity must be determined from other passages of Scripture.

The fact that the natural and physical relationship of the prodigal to his father could not be effaced by the sins of disobedience, is of no force as an argument for, and has no bearing upon, the contention that the gracious, spiritual, and moral relation of filiation to the Divine cannot be forfeited. The parable does say that the loving interest of God in the lost sinner and His unspeakably hearty welcome of the returning penitent, are like the affectionate longing and loving welcome of a

father for his long-lost son; but it is as silent as the grave on the subject of the Divine Fatherhood and man's filial relation to God.

The truth taught by Jesus in regard to God's Fatherhood toward man, and man's filial relation to God, will be found to be contained in this statement, namely, that

*(b) Jesus Makes the Relationship Universally Possible, but Not thereby Actually Universal*

It is doubtless true that in the Old Testament the kingly relation of God to man is the characteristic one, while with Jesus it is the <sup>God, both King and Father</sup> paternal relation; for in Him first has it been revealed clearly that all men may become the sons of God. But it is also true, as Dr. W. N. Clarke confesses, that "Jesus made much use of the kingly language. The mention of the kingdom of God was frequently upon His lips, and many of His parables illustrated the nature and

movements of that kingdom" (1: 132). It is not true, however, that "He spoke of kingship which was vanishing away" (1: 133); for it is for the coming of His kingdom that we are taught to pray, "And of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1: 33); and in the very nature of things God can never cease to be "the King eternal" (1 Tim. 1: 17); the song of Moses and of the Lamb will be addressed unto the "Lord God, the Almighty, King of the ages" (Rev. 15: 3); and on the vesture and on the thigh of the eternal "Word of God" is a name written that can never be effaced, "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (Rev. 19: 13, 16). The ideal is for us to come to the point of experience, not where kingship vanishes away, but where we may say truly and in perfect confidence, "The King is our Father," and remember that we are to be princes, kings, as well as children (Rev. 1: 6).

It is one of the gracious revelations of



the Word that God is Father as well as King, that the Christian name for our sovereign Lord

The Christian name for God

is Father, though this name is not used frequently in the Gospels with reference to men. "In the New Testament," says Dr. Bradford (2: 62), "the name Father is applied to Deity (chiefly by Jesus) 256 times." It is

Not often used with reference to men

commonly supposed—Dr. Bradford seems to take it for granted—that the name is used thus frequently with reference to God's relation to man. But is it not all the more significant that the cases in which God is spoken of as the Father of men are comparatively few? In Matthew this relation is spoken of only twenty-one times, in Mark twice, in Luke four times, and in John's Gospel, of which Dr. Bradford (2: 62) says, this name "shines from every page," God is mentioned as the Father of men *only once* (John 20: 17). Several of these are duplications, so that there is a record of

## 190    “Father,” in Three Senses

Jesus speaking of God as the Father of men only about twenty-two times. Paul comes behind his Master only a very little in this particular, using the name Father for God in this relation twenty-one times. Jesus uses this name, Father, in three senses: “*The Father*,” that is, the absolute Father, the model of all true fatherhood, essentially and eternally the Father, as the Son is essentially and eternally the Son and the archetype of all filial relationship to God; “*My Father*,” by the use of which Jesus speaks of His own unique personal relationship to “the Father” and declares Himself consciously beloved as God’s Son; “*Your Father*,” spoken only to those who through faith have come to participate in Christ’s filial relationship to God.

Jesus did, indeed, make much use of the name, Father. To Him that alone could  
The name in  
God’s kingdom  
and family be the natural and normal  
name for God. And it is just  
as true that He taught His disciples the

use of that same name as the most fitting, natural, and normal name to be employed by those who had become the children of God through adoption by faith. He came to establish a Christian dispensation, and to teach a phraseology suited to Christian and redeemed conditions. It does not, therefore, follow that those who voluntarily exclude themselves from these redeemed conditions are entitled to the unrestricted use of the forms of speech belonging only to the kingdom of heaven and to the family of God.

It seems to be undisputed that, according to the New Testament view, the kingdom does not include all men, that it is limited by moral and spiritual conditions. On what basis, then, can the Divine family, so far as men are concerned, be more extensive than the Divine kingdom? The facts already presented and yet to be considered, make it plain that there is no such basis. Jesus declared God, says Professor Bruce, "so

Kingdom  
and family  
co-extensive

that the name Father took its place in human speech as the Christian name for the Divine Being. The declaration was an essential part of the doctrine of the kingdom. The title Father is the appropriate name of God in the kingdom of grace, for it is the kingdom of fatherly love" (9: 109). He would have been more consistent, if he had said that this name is not appropriate beyond the limits of the kingdom of grace; in other words, that the kingdom and family of God are coextensive.

The fact is that in the teachings of Jesus there is perpetuated the twofold classification of mankind made by the Old Testament immediately after the record of the first sin. Those who then were known as "the seed of the serpent," and "the sons of God," He calls "the sons of the evil one" (Matt. 13: 38), and the "sons of your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5: 45). In Matthew 10: 16 He sharply con-

Two classes of  
men

trasts the two classes, comparing them to “sheep” and “wolves,” and of the former He says that God is their Father (v. 20). Is it to be supposed that He considered God was the Father also of the “wolves”?

Nothing is taught more plainly by Jesus than this, that unbelievers are not in any sense children of God.

One of the severest rebukes ever uttered by the Master

Unbelievers rebuked for calling God their Father

was spoken against those who had the effrontery, as unbelievers, to claim, what we are now told is the inalienable right of the most hardened sinner, that God was their Father. To the unbelieving Jews who made this claim, Jesus said, “If God were your Father, ye would love me. . . . Ye are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. . . . He is a liar and the father thereof” (John 8: 39-44). We are not surprised to find Universalists, who have become adepts in explaining away the

plain meaning of Scripture, affirming that Jesus uses this language "only in that figurative way" (3: 25); but even if it is a figure, it certainly is taking strange liberties with the teachings of Jesus, to say that He considered those as children of God whose Divine filiation He expressly denied, and whom He declared to be the children of the Devil.

Says Bishop Merrill, "The doctrine of the Universal Fatherhood of God has been so persistently preached of late years, and with such enthusiasm, as to impress the busy, rushing masses that redemption was a trivial affair, a sort of make-believe intervention, with no serious consequences following its acceptance or rejection, everything belonging to eternal relations and destiny having been settled in the fact and law of creation. But this gratuitous assumption with regard to the Divine Fatherhood is not a new thing, although its greatest emphasis is of modern date. In our Lord's time some unbelieving Jews

set up the same claim in His presence, and never on any other occasion did He exhibit deeper resentment, or use greater severity of speech, than when denying this claim, and rebuking those who made it. They were boasting of racial rights as the chosen people. First they said to Him, 'Abraham is our Father.' In the thought of the Jew this was a high claim, and one which was deemed all-sufficient and indisputable. But Jesus desired to impress them that there was a spiritual relation with Abraham which was of more importance than the fleshly relation. So He answered them, 'If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham'—having the spiritual relation in mind as the relation of highest value. Then, not grasping His thought, and perhaps being piqued that their boast was not conceded, they advanced the higher claim, and said, 'We have one Father, even God.' This assumption raised a question of fact. It was sharply stated, and must be ad-

mitted or denied. If admitted, it might justify the modern assumption of universal Fatherhood, or that all are God's children whom He created. Or, in other words, if this modern contention were sound, and if all are in fact God's children, then the claim of these Jews was right, and our Lord would have been compelled to acknowledge it. But He did not. On the other hand, He most vehemently denied it, and gave an answer which ought to silence forever all pretenses to being God's children on the ground of creation or natural relation. 'Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded and came forth from God; neither came I of myself, but He sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your Father the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.' Surely, then, any doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood which holds or implies that men are naturally



God's children, or children because of creation, or in any way so related to Him as to exclude the necessity of redemption and adoption, in order to heirship in His family and kingdom, is not of God, but contrary to the plain testimony of our Lord Himself” (33: 78-80).

On one occasion, when Jesus was told that His mother and brethren desired to speak with Him, “He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold, my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother” (Matt. 12: 46-50). This is a clear and very emphatic statement of the fact that relationship in the Divine family is not a matter of blood, of physical origin and creation, but solely a question of moral and spiritual likeness to the Divine. The failure to grasp this distinction between human and Divine, natural and gracious filiation, is the cause

Not physical  
origin, but  
moral and  
spiritual  
likeness

of endless confusion on this subject. We are no more the children of God because He created us, than a watch is the son of a watchmaker because he made it. "There is not, then," says Dr. Alexander, "a single passage in all the four Gospels that makes it certain or even probable that Jesus taught the universal Fatherhood of God. . . . There is in all the passages where He speaks of God as Father of men something either in the situation or the context or the language itself which restricts this relation to a certain kind and class of men. This class consists of those who are *bona fide* disciples of Jesus . . . who, like Jesus, are filial in spirit and at heart obedient to the will of their Father, notwithstanding many superficial crudities and imperfections" (20: 178, 182, 183).

Over against the silence of the parable  
Jesus settles it,  
 that some are  
 not children of the Prodigal Son and all  
 the unwarranted inferences  
 alleged in support of the unscriptural

## A Change of Relationship Required 199

doctrine of the universal Divine Fatherhood, we place the positive declaration of Jesus to the unbelieving Jews, that they were not children of God but of the Devil; His woe upon the scribes and Pharisees who "compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is become so, ye make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves" (Matt. 23: 15); and the Master's own interpretation of the parable of the Tares, that "the good seed are the sons of the kingdom," but "the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy that sowed them is the Devil" (Matt. 13: 38, 39). Applying the test—What does Jesus say about it?—it would indeed seem that the falsity of the doctrine that God is a universal Father, is put forever beyond question.

Now, if those who are "sons of the evil one" ever become "sons of your Father who is in heaven," something more will be required than a mere change of relations (3: 29)—a

A change of  
relationship  
required

## 200 God's Family Graciously Open to All

change of relationship is an absolute necessity.

To this end, God's family is graciously open to all; "for the Son of man is come to seek and to save that God's family graciously open to all which was lost" (Luke 19: 10; Matt. 9: 12, 13). It is free to all to become children of God. And in this sense alone—just as in the case of the Atonement—God's Fatherhood is universal. In order that this change in man's relationship to God may become a reality, and that the transfer may take place into the new kingdom and family of God, Jesus gives the privilege, power, and "right to become children of God" (John 1: 12). But if the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God be true, then this declaration of John that Jesus gives "the right to *become* children of God," is reduced to nonsense; for what sense can there be in the giving of the right to a man "to become what he already is" (3: 28)? And yet the advocates of that doc-

trine teach this absurdity in this very language. John does not say that Jesus gives the right to realize an existing sonship, or for an infant son to develop into a full-grown son, but *to become a son*. (Although the words of an Apostle, yet because of its vital connection with the teachings of Jesus on the new birth as the means of becoming a member of God's family, we prefer to make an exception of this single passage and treat it in connection with the words of Jesus.)

That this change to sonship in the Divine family does not result from the process of natural generation or creation, but comes By means of  
the new birth about only by means of the new birth, is shown by a threefold contrast: "But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name: who were born, not of blood [that is, says Professor J. S. Candlish, "they did not become sons of God through or in virtue of

their being of the one blood of which God has made all mankind" (25: 220<sup>1</sup>)], nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, *but of God*" (John 1: 12, 13). "Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3: 5, 6). The sinner is dead in trespasses and sins, and needs to receive a new life. Such a life involves a new begetting, a new creation. Birth means the bringing into being of the newly begotten life. To be born, is to become somebody's child; to be born of the Spirit, to be born of God, is to become a child of God; and there is no other way revealed to mortals.

This new life and new relation of sonship to God are connected with the person of Christ, and can be received and enjoyed only by receiving and believing in Him (John 1: 12; 5: 24), and thus coming into a participa-

Through faith  
in Christ

tion, as Dr. Candlish puts it, in "His own unique relation to the Father, which is the archetype of all filial relationship to God" (25: 218<sup>1</sup>).

In the view of Jesus, to be a child of God, was in itself no common privilege which might be predicated of all, without regard to character, but is rather the highest honor and privilege that can be claimed by any of the sons of men. "It is by no means," says Weiss, "the relation in which God stands to all men" (26: 92-94). It is in itself the highest evidence of God's love, and can be a fact only in the kingdom which was founded by Jesus. But when one chooses this Divinely begotten relationship, and as long as he continues to make it his supreme business to be a son of God (Matt. 5: 48; 6: 33), then all things are his: forgiveness (Matt. 6: 14), answer to prayer (Matt. 7: 11), the supply of all need (Matt. 6: 31-33), the help of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 10: 19, 20),

Privileges of  
sons of God

and a glorious inheritance in the everlasting kingdom of his Father (Matt. 13: 43; 25: 34; Luke 12: 32). *'Jesus, by His Atonement, makes the relation of sonship to God, and hence also the Divine Fatherhood, universally possible, but not thereby actually universal.*

#### C.—THE TEACHING OF THE APOSTLES

##### (a) *View of the Advocates of the Universal Fatherhood*

As to the import of what the Apostles have to say on the subject, there is great confusion among the advocates of the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God. Dr. W. N. Clarke (1: 133, 134) thinks the Epistles an advance on the Gospels in presenting the family idea, and Dr. Adams (3: 19) finds here only the thought of God as the universal Father, and, hence, that "salvation [is] the common destiny of the race." But on the other hand, Dr. Bradford

Great  
confusion



(2: 65) finds the Epistles less clear than the Gospels, and Professor Bruce (10: 192) says that "Paul failed to use the relation as one applicable to men in general." On the whole, it is confessed that there is not so much hope in the teaching of the Apostles for this doctrine, as in the words of Jesus; and we already have seen that there is none at all there.

Professor Bruce finds in Acts 17: 29 the only exception in Paul's teaching to the doctrine of a conditional,

Acts 17: 29

instead of a universal, sonship (10: 192, 193). "Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold," etc. But is this an exception? Let us see. The Apostle's argument is this: The Athenians ought to seek and find the Lord, because He is not far from any of us; they have their life and being in and from Him, even as their own poets acknowledge; and since they have their life and being from God, they ought not to think that God can

possibly be like an image graven by art and man's device; for He who is the source of life, cannot Himself be lifeless, and the Author of man's being cannot be like an image made by man. This means, then, that since man is an intelligent personality, God, as the Author of man's being, must also be an intelligent Person. The Apostle does not use the word *υιοί* (sons), which contains the idea of relationship, but he borrows a word from a Greek poet, *γένος* (offspring), which is a general term, used also of animals, the emphatic idea of which is origin, or derivation of life, and not relationship. In other words, this passage does not refer to the subject of God as a Father to anybody.

The passage in Hebrews 12: 9, where God is referred to as "The Father of spirits," may refer only to the matter of origin in creation, as we speak of a legislator as being the father of a bill, without any parental

idea involved. Or it may be that the writer is thinking only of believers, that the expression means the same as if it said "the Father of our spirits" (which may be the true reading, as the margin suggests), in harmony with 1 Corinthians 8: 6, "to us," that is, to Christian believers, "there is one God, the Father." But in any case it is plain that the author does not refer to a universal paternal relation; for in the preceding verse he speaks of a class of men who are "*not* sons."

Of Ephesians 4: 6, which calls God the "Father of all," Dr. Adams confesses, "Undoubtedly this is an utterance to Christians" (3: <sup>Ephesians 4: 6</sup> 20), and his assumption that it is nevertheless a statement of a universal fact, is wholly gratuitous.

Over against all of these assumptions and the unsubstantiated position of the advocates of man's universal filial relationship to God, we now propose to show that

(b) *The Apostles Teach that Man's Sonship in the Divine Family is Conditional*

By way of introduction to this part of the discussion, we wish to declare our point of view: namely, that the Bible is the word of an Author—or, if you please, the words of many authors, who were inspired, enlightened, and directed by One—who is sufficiently comprehensive in His knowledge of a subject never to contradict Himself. While in an important sense there is such a thing as a doctrine of Paul and of James and of John; yet this is true only in the sense that God has used different personalities to present and emphasize the various elements of His truth, so that, when all these views are combined, we have, not a heterogeneous mass of contradictory and conflicting doctrines, but rather one harmonious, self-consistent, and satisfying living body of faith. Whoever, therefore, brings forth from this

The Bible  
harmonious  
with itself

Book of living truth, teachings which are self-contradictory, is, to that extent, not an interpreter, but a misinterpreter of the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever. Consequently we have no sympathy with such a view as this from Dr. Bruce (10: 189): "In Christ's doctrine God is always a Father, a Father even to the unthankful and evil, even to unfilial prodigals. In the Apostle's [Paul's] doctrine, as commonly understood [and Dr. Bruce himself so understands it (10: 192), pp. 204, 205], God becomes Father by an act of adoption graciously exercised toward persons previously occupying a lower position than that of sons." We have seen that Jesus taught no such doctrine as Dr. Bruce here attributes to Him, and that He did teach in effect what this statement attributes to Paul. It is quite characteristic of false doctrines that they make the Bible self-contradictory. Either the Bible and the Christian system therein revealed are not worthy of confi-

dence, or every true doctrine must be based upon a *harmonious and correct* interpretation of the *whole Book*. The teaching of Jesus, therefore, will be found not to contradict the Law and the Prophets, but rather to give a more full, complete, and glorious revelation of the Divine Person and will. And the teaching of the Apostles will be simply an unfolding, under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, of the words of their unapproachable Master. We have found the Old Testament and Jesus to be in harmony. We would expect to find the Apostles in harmony with both, and we shall not be disappointed.

Following the division made by Moses and Jesus (pp. 156, 192), the Apostles continually speak of two classes of men: *first*, those who are "bastards and not sons," "aliens," "strangers," "foreigners," "enemies," "children of the Devil;" *secondly*, "saints," "brethren," "believers," "fellow-citizens," "fel-

Still two  
classes

low-heirs," "the children of God." And it is a fact worthy of note, that Jesus Himself and the Apostle "whom Jesus loved," used the strongest terms in characterizing the filial relation of the sinner—Jesus saying to the unbelieving Jews, "Ye are of your father the Devil" (John 8: 44), and John, that moral and spiritual character and life make "the children of God manifest, and the children of the Devil" (1 Jno. 3: 9, 10). These terms are equaled only by Paul, who, by the Holy Spirit, directly addressed Elymas, of Cyprus, in these words, "Thou son of the Devil" (Acts 13: 10).

It is interesting and suggestive to note the methods by which those who contend that God is a universal Father reconcile these opposing terms on the basis of their doctrine. The first, easiest, and most general method, is the simple one of making no reference whatever to those passages and expressions which teach or imply that some men

Attempts at  
reconciliation

are "not sons" of God. Doctors W. N. Clarke, Bradford, and Fairbairn, and their class almost universally, ignore the existence of all Biblical teaching out of harmony with their doctrine on this subject.

One class  
ignored

With Beyschlag, all angels and devils are only figures of speech, having no actual existence, and, of course, this carries with it the explaining away of all such impossible creatures as "children of the Devil." This, perhaps, is as satisfactory as Wendt's method of openly declaring contradictions, without any attempt at reconciliation (p. 170).

Figures of  
speech

One author, in the interest of his Universalist theology, makes a bold attempt to reconcile with his doctrine these apparently conflicting teachings of Scripture. Says Dr. Adams (3: 22-24): "Such phrases as these refer not to the native and essential nature of the soul, . . . but to an acquired char-

The method of  
Universalism



acter. . . . Sin . . . . does not, for it cannot, alter man's innate and constitutional relation to God. The creation of man in the image of God means . . . . that man is constitutionally in the likeness of his Maker. He has in him all the capacities of a true son of God, . . . . and those capacities . . . . are the inalienable claim of the soul to the position of sonship. Is not your babe your child? Must he grow to maturity, and learn to obey and love you, before he is your son; or do his very capacities, his constitution, his germinal characteristics, entitle him to your love, your care, your oversight as a father? . . . . Capacity for sonship is sonship, when it inheres in the very constitution of the offspring. And whatever inheres in that constitution cannot be lost out of it, except by the annihilation of life itself."

Concerning this attempted reconciliation we remark: *First*, his first sentence denies the doctrine of *native* (nothing is

said here about total) depravity, a doctrine taught by Jesus: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh"—flesh in the sense of depraved moral quality. And we place over against his assertion the Scriptural fact that these phrases do refer to "the native and essential nature," as well as to the "acquired character" of sinful souls that refuse the offer of Divine mercy in regeneration and are "*by nature* children of wrath" (Eph. 2: 3). Evidently Paul here refers to "the native and essential nature," to a depravity that "inheres in the constitution."

*Secondly*, "man's innate and constitutional relation to God"—meaning thereby, as Dr. Adams does, the relation based solely on the physical birth or creation—since the Fall, is *not* a relation of sonship (p. 153), but only the relation of a creature, though a very exalted creature, to the Creator, and of course, "sin cannot alter" such a relation.

*Thirdly*, man by creation "is constitu-

tionally in the likeness of his Maker" in the sense of being an intelligent personality; but we have seen already that the moral element of that original image of God in man, which constituted man originally a child of God, has been lost, and that with it man's sonship has been forfeited (pp. 153, 154).

*Fourthly*, your babe is your child by physical procreation and birth—in its "constitution" and "germinal characteristics," a physical, mental, and moral image of your own natural self; and no circumstance can alter such a fact. Man is not a child of God by physical generation, but only by a spiritual begetting or regeneration. Such a relationship is not "inalienable," but alienable, and in fact, many who were sons have become "aliens," "strangers," "foreigners" (pp. 134-145).

*Fifthly*, "capacity for sonship is" *not* sonship. Your babe is not your son because it has the capacity of becoming a

full-grown son—it is your son *from birth*. Man is not a son of God because created with the capacity and endowed with the gracious possibility of becoming a child of God, but because by faith he receives the Savior and is born of God and *from that birth* is a son of God.

*Sixthly*, sonship to God does not by nature “inhere in the constitution” of man, as we have seen, but is a matter of spiritual and gracious relationship, and consequently the last sentence of Dr. Adams is without bearing on the subject.

That sonship in the Divine family can be and has been forfeited, has been shown (pp. 127-145). Here we need only to be reminded again that man’s filial relation to God is not based upon any physical fact, but is entirely a spiritual matter, a question of grace. And that which is of grace may cease, when the conditions of receiving or retaining grace are not complied with. Sonship does not “inhere in the constitution” so that it “cannot be lost out

of it," but is a gift of grace, and hence may be withdrawn. Therefore Dr. Adams' "most serious difficulty" is wholly imaginary. He says that God "makes us in His image or not in His image. If . . . in His image, then He makes us by very birth and constitution His children. If he does not make us in His image, . . . how can He hold us guilty for conforming to the very constitution He has given us?" For an answer to this, we need first to remember what has been said concerning the nature of that "image" (p. 152); and, secondly, to be reminded that God at first created man pure and a member of His family; that man chose sin and thereby forfeited his sonship; that, while *by nature* man since has been begotten in the image of fallen Adam, *by grace*, through the virtue of Christ's sacrifice, every child still comes into this world a member of God's family; that God desires that everyone should choose so to continue; and that, when

man, in spite of this provision, deliberately chooses sin, and thus forfeits his gracious relationship, God still places before him the gracious possibility of a regenerated and renewed nature, of being born again and becoming a child of God. When, in the presence of Calvary, man willfully turns from God, rejects Christ, and refuses these provisions of grace for deliverance from sin and a renewal in holiness, it cannot be difficult to see how God can and must hold him guilty, unless the latitudinarian "liberalism" of the one troubled with this difficulty, has led him to the logical outcome of his principles, from indifference to truth to indifference to righteousness.

The attempt, therefore, to reconcile the conflicting descriptive phrases of the two classes of men found in the Apostolic teachings on the basis of the universal Divine Fatherhood, utterly falls to the ground. In common, then, with the teaching of the Old Testament and of

Jesus, the Apostles recognize men as sustaining a twofold filial relation, which divides them into two classes, known as "the children of God," and those who are "not sons" of God, but are "children of the Devil."

This last phrase, "children of the Devil," represents a state of ruin as the result of sin, which necessitates a possible revolution of

Sonship by  
adoption

man's nature and relationship, in order that every member of this class may become a member of the first class, known as "the children of God." The keyword in Apostolic teaching for the solution of this mighty problem is "adoption" or sonship. This means, as Weiss puts it, that "man is no more in himself a child of God than he is righteous in himself" (26: 449); that those who are to become sons by adoption are manifestly not sons by their natural birth, for, says Dr. Beet, "no Roman adopted his own son" (34: 57). And he adds, "Paul never speaks of all

men as sons of God, but habitually uses language which excludes this idea" (34: 57). In Roman law, adoption, says Dr. Candlish (24: 41<sup>1</sup>), "strictly denoted the taking, by one man, of a son of another to be his son." And this is what it means in Apostolic teaching. God has manifested His love in that He has made it possible to transform children of the Devil into sons of God, by adopting them into His own family and giving them a right to the inheritance of heaven.

But in order that man may be a real and not a merely legal son of God, having a truly filial spirit, partaking of the Divine, instead of the Satanic nature, the Divine life must be *begotten* in him, he must be *born* of God, his sonship must proceed, not simply from adoption, but from a spiritual *birth*, which makes him as truly and really a son of God, as his physical birth made him a son of his earthly father. And the Apostles constantly reiterate the teaching of their

Sonship  
through the  
new birth



Master that God's children are "begotten" and "born of God."<sup>1</sup>

There always must be a common nature between a father and his son. In human relationship, this is deter-

Likeness of  
nature by  
birth

mined by the physical birth. So also does the spiritual birth determine spiritual and moral likeness between God and His newborn son. "If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that everyone also that doeth righteousness is *begotten of Him*" (1 Jno. 2: 29). "Whosoever is *begotten of God* doeth no sin." (1 Jno. 3: 9). There can be no such likeness of character and life, except from the birth of the Spirit; and without the new birth, there is no such thing as being a son of God. "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" (1 Jno. 3: 10).

God promises to be a Father only to

<sup>1</sup> Gal. 4: 29; Jas. 1: 18; 1 Pet. 1: 3, 23; 1 Jno. 5: 1.

those who "come out from among them," and are "separate," and who "touch no unclean thing;" and to such, and to such only, does He say, "Ye shall be to me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. 6: 17, 18). It is a pity that this holy relationship has been made out to be a thing common and unclean, based upon a physical generation instead of upon a spiritual regeneration, and applied equally to those who have received the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, and to those who refuse this washing and prefer to wallow in the mire of sin and all uncleanness.

Human sonship in the Divine family is not from nature, but by grace. "That is," says Paul, "it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed" (Rom. 9: 8; 4: 16). To be a child of God, man must be born of God, in His moral likeness, a fact which, says Beyschlag, "is evi-

Sonship by  
grace

dent from the nature of God as holiness and righteousness" (12:461).

This sonship in the Divine family is grounded, not in creation, but in redemption. "God sent forth His Son . . . that He might Grounded in redemption *redeem* them that were under the law, *that we might receive* the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4: 4, 5).

Sonship is received through faith; "for ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3: 26). Conditioned on faith Not only did Christ, as the Firstborn of the family of God, lay the foundation in His atoning sacrifice upon which our sonship might be based, but our sonship "requires vital union with Him, and participation in His life and Spirit" (19: 145), and that union is accomplished by faith.

Sonship means a "new creation" "in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Eph. 4: 24), a re- Result, "a new creature" sult that is wrought "through the wash-

## 224 Determining Factor of Sonship

ing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3: 5; John 3: 5).

The Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirits to the specific fact of sonship

Witness and  
determining  
factor of  
sonship

(Rom. 8: 15, 16; Gal. 4: 6), a glorious truth, which "the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God has aided to becloud" (28: 33). And the possession of the Spirit is the determining factor of our sonship; for "if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. 8: 9), and "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Rom. 8: 14), "words," says Beyschlag, "which manifestly exclude the possibility of God receiving men as His children who have not received the Spirit" (12: 202), and which put it beyond doubt that those who are led by another spirit are not sons of God.

Pledge of the  
inheritance

In the Apostolic view, as in the view of Jesus, sonship in itself is the pledge of our possession of

the promised inheritance. "If a son, then [because and in virtue of that very fact and relationship] an heir" (Gal. 4: 7).

The blessings of this filial inheritance, thus assured to us because of our "adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself," are, in

Blessings of  
real sonship

part, that we have "grace freely bestowed on us in the Beloved, . . . redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses" (Eph. 1: 5-7), freedom from the law and from "the mind of the flesh" which "is enmity against God" (Rom. 8: 2, 5-9; Gal. 4: 5); we are endowed with the Spirit of sonship (Gal. 4: 6), and "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1: 13); we have God for our Father (Col. 1: 2), and hence ours is the confidence of a filial intercourse with Him (Rom. 8: 15; Gal. 4: 6); He implants the impulse to keep His law (Rom. 8: 13, 14; Heb. 8: 10), makes "known unto us the mystery of His will" (Eph. 1: 9), and guarantees our right, as long

as we are sons, to the future inheritance (1 Pet. 1: 3-5). All these blessings belong to all the redeemed sons of God, and they belong to them *as sons*. "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8: 17). This recital makes evident the truth of this passage from Dr. Bruce (10: 192): "It is certain at least that St. Paul did most vigorously enforce the filial dignity and privileges of Christians, and in connection therewith the duty incumbent on all believers to take out of their filial standing all the comfort and inspiration it was fitted to yield. Nothing is more fundamental in Pauline hortatory ethics than the exhortation: Stand fast in sonship and its liberties and privileges."

Of course, on the foregoing point of the inalienable blessings of sonship, otherwise orthodox Christians, who believe in the universal Fatherhood, part company with apostolic teaching; for, if all men are

Deception of  
fictitious  
universal  
sonship

by nature the children of Jehovah, then there are countless numbers whose sonship in the Divine family is bringing them none of the foregoing blessings enumerated by the Apostles as belonging to this relationship (Eph. 1: 5-14), and, unless one is to accept real Universalism entire, even hell itself is full of the sons of God. But this is not Apostolic teaching. They evidently never heard of such a destiny for any child of God. Their teaching was, Be sure that you are a son, and the inheritance will take care of itself as the inherent privilege of sonship in the Divine family. It would not seem to be an open question, that the sonship which is free to all, but contingent on personal choice, and involving in itself the eternal heavenly inheritance, is far preferable to a sonship that is common to all, but which may leave the sun of its possessor to set in eternal night. Some one may ask, What is the difference whether one holds that sonship is inalienable and the inheritance

forfeitable, or that sonship is conditional and the inheritance inherent in the filial relation? It makes this difference, that the latter position is Scriptural and the former unscriptural—and that is a wide difference; that, according to Scripture, as we have seen, while sonship exists, the inheritance is not forfeitable; and that the doctrine of inalienable natural sonship strikes at the foundation of the whole Christian system (pp. 79-93).

Without doubt, in the Biblical view, sonship in itself assures the child great privileges. If you are a child, and as long as you are a child, the inheritance is inalienably yours. This is Apostolic logic. "If children, then heirs." Well then may Dr. Bruce say, notwithstanding his idea of Paul's failure to grasp the doctrine of universal sonship (pp. 204, 205)—manifestly an intentional failure on Paul's part—"There can be no question that, for the Apostle, the filial standing of a believer is

A sure basis of  
hope



a very real and precious thing. It is as real," he adds, "as if it were based on nature, and not on an arbitrary act of adoption" (10: 189). Probably to the Apostle's mind; sonship was all the more real and precious for this very reason, that it is based on a participation in the Divine nature through a spiritual birth grounded in the gracious work of the redeeming Son, which gives a much more substantial basis for sonship that means something than that which Dr. Bruce calls "nature."

The foregoing exegetical argument has made it clear that man's sonship in the Divine family is conditional,  
and not inevitably universal; Sonship conditional and universally possible  
for it has been shown that

the Biblical doctrine is that God is not the Father of any man because He has created him, but that He is our Father only in and through Christ; that sonship and Fatherhood are grounded, not in creation, but in redemption; that we are sons of

God, not by being born physically, but by being born again, born of the Spirit, born of God; that Jesus, by His Atonement, has made Fatherhood and sonship universally possible, but not thereby actually universal; and that every responsible moral agent has the privilege and is under the obligation and necessity of determining his own spiritual affiliation. And thus, since the final test of any doctrine is the Scriptural, the decisive blow is struck at the teaching that God is a universal Father, by the fact that this doctrine has no basis in Scripture—neither in the Law, the Prophets, the Psalms, the words of Jesus, nor the teachings of the Apostles.

D.—FATAL TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE  
UNIVERSAL FATHERHOOD, THAT IT  
IS NOT GROUNDED IN SCRIPTURE

We have noted before that little effort  
Scripture  
ignored
is made to put this doctrine  
on a Scriptural basis. When-  
 ever such an attempt is made, it ends

in much misinterpretation of the Word, and generally in utterly ignoring those portions of Scripture which clearly prove the universal Fatherhood to be an untenable doctrine.

Apparently this teaching is based mainly on imagination and sentimentalism. In saying this, we do not mean to take an unfair advantage by attempting to create a prejudice. Dr. Bradford has written a book for the purpose of establishing this doctrine and interpreting all other problems by it. He uses Scripture when that suits his preconceived purpose, and overrides or ignores the Word with equal impunity when it stands in his way. He makes this doctrine "the basis of optimism," pictures the outcome, and then confesses, "True, this is imagination" (2: 98). But it is not as purely imaginary as his basic doctrine. By this doctrine he interprets the problem of punishment, and proves his own utter untrustworthiness as a teacher

in this realm of thought, by this declaration: "The ultimate question, when such subjects are approached, is not what is written, even in the Bible, . . . but rather what . . . coincides with the voice of the heart" (2: 233). "A mother's intuition is more trustworthy" (2: 244). If Dr. Bradford wishes to transfer the basis of his hopes to the teachings of those lands where "the voice of the heart" and "a mother's intuition" have not been formed under the influence of "what is written in the Bible," he will find no obstacle in his way resulting from any envious disposition on our part. But he will not do it; for as soon as he reaches the subject of death and immortal life, where "human feelings" cause people to "regard death as the most to be dreaded of conceivable events," and "our human hearts rebel at the processes by which we are disciplined into grace and beauty," he returns to the teachings which would not serve his purpose in the preceding chapter

—the teachings of Jesus and Paul—for that “vision” in which “death goes out of sight in the glory that is being revealed” (2: 268, 269, 271, 272). But he who has ignored those teachings as being less to be trusted than “the voice of the heart” and “a mother’s intuition” concerning the doom of the impenitent, is estopped from quoting the same teachers as authority to still “the voice of the heart” and “a mother’s intuition” on the subject of death, and to give comfort by their revelation of glory for the righteous. It is just such sentimentalism as this—sentimentalism that persists in ignoring the iniquity of sin and the righteous and punitive wrath of the Almighty against wickedness—that is determined to make it appear that the Holy God is the Father of all spirits, even of the most depraved and unholy. The reason of this, it has been made manifest (p. 104), is the evident desire to rid the world of the Scriptural idea of final punishment for sin.

Since we have learned the real teaching of the Bible on the subject, we are not surprised that those who hold to the notion that this Fatherhood is universal, make little or no use of Scripture in the attempt to establish their doctrine, and that they even undertake to minify the authority of the holy Book. But if we are not to be left in the thick fog of human conjecture, the Bible must be "our only and sufficient rule of faith," and by it alone this doctrine must be judged. Furthermore, without this basis, no one, so far as we know, has ever been able, in a truly filial spirit and feeling, to call God Father. The Greeks prayed to Father Zeus, but in doing so, says Beyschlag, they "thought only of the author and preserver of nature" (II: 80, 81). It is a profound truth, that "The impulse to say 'Father,' is an impulse of faith alone" (I: 118), though it also may find rational "support from the scientific side." Where does

that impulse receive any adequate inspiration outside of Biblical revelation? And if we are dependent upon the Bible for this impulse, then we must call God "our Father" only in harmony with the teaching of the Book that furnishes the filial spirit and impulse. But that Book knows nothing of an unconditional universal Fatherhood.





## **PART III**

# **THE TRUE DOCTRINE OF THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD AND THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN**



## PART III

### THE TRUE DOCTRINE OF THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD AND THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN

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#### A.—THE DOCTRINE STATED

WE are now in possession of the data necessary to a systematic statement of the doctrine under consideration, Fatherhood defined excepting only that we first must understand what we mean by fatherhood. At this point there is a vital weakness among the advocates of the false doctrine. They all confound fatherhood with origination, creation, and affectionate providence.<sup>1</sup> If, however, we would avoid endless confusion, we must seek an exact definition, giving only what is essential to all fatherhood, wherever that

<sup>1</sup> See 1: 120, 121; 2: 64; 3: 26; 18: 11.

relationship is found, whether it is physical or spiritual, natural or moral, animal, human, Satanic, or Divine. According to Webster, a father is "one who has begotten a child." Including an element universally acknowledged, that "identity of nature between parent and child is essential to the idea of fatherhood" (2: 59; 1: 120), we formulate the following definition: *Fatherhood implies the begetting of a child with a nature in the likeness of the father.* A father is one who has begotten a child in his own likeness. This nature or likeness involves more than mere personality, which, according to Dr. Bradford, "is all that distinguishes him (man) as in the image of God" (2: 281). The qualities of personality do not exhaust the Biblical idea of the Divine image in which man was and is to be. That personality must be Divine and not Satanic—holy and not sinful. Any man is sufficiently like any other man, so that it might be said, in a

very true sense, that he is in the image of the other man. But in a larger and truer sense he is in the image of the man who is his father, he has received and partakes of the life of that man as of no other, he has certain peculiarities of nature, thought, action, etc., that otherwise he would not possess. Such, in analogy, is the difference between the image of God universally existing in man despite his sin (but which no more makes him a son of God than any one man's likeness to his fellow-man makes all other men his father), and that image of holy personality which constitutes sonship.

The method of the begetting implied in fatherhood in the animal and human kingdoms we all understand to be that of procreation.

The method a  
mystery

But in the spiritual realm of relationship in the Godhead and between God and man, the method of the begetting must remain an unfathomed mystery.

One thing, however, is certain. The

notion of creation, in the sense in which that word generally is used, is no part of the idea of fatherhood. Christ is not a creature, and yet He is the First-begotten Son of God. For the production of being, creation is necessary; for the production of a child, there must be a begetting. Seeking to emphasize the greatness of the spiritual transformation required in regeneration and thinking of the production of a new moral nature and a new relationship, it is very proper to speak of the newly born child of God as a new creature, a new creation, in perfect harmony with the fact that "there is but one way through which the relation of sonship can be established, and that is by begetting" (29: 109). And this is no mere figure of speech. Jesus meant more than this in calling God His Father, and doubtless also in calling God the Father of His disciples. When God begets children among men, it means that He confers upon men

the nature and disposition of sons, making actual sons out of those who were not sons, by imparting to them His own nature and life. The filial relationship can never be created or made, but can only be begotten.

Man may be a partaker of the nature of the Satanic personality, and he may be a partaker of the nature of the Divine personality—he may be a child of the Devil, or a child of God, though we may not be able to comprehend the process in either case. If man partakes of the Divine nature, he is a child of God; if of the nature of Satan, he is a child of the Devil. Filiation corresponds to the nature begotten.

Another thing is certain. In this realm we have to do only with a moral and spiritual relationship after the likeness of that which exists eternally in the Godhead between the Father and the Son. All physical notions are excluded (pp. 129-133). The

Filiation  
corresponds  
to nature

A moral and  
spiritual  
relationship

paternal relationship of God to any being depends upon a Divine spiritual begetting of that being in the moral and spiritual likeness of God. With this understanding of what we mean by fatherhood, and on the basis of the exegetical developments of Part II, we are prepared for a statement of the true doctrine of the Fatherhood of God as taught in the Holy Scriptures.

Before there was a man on the earth or a created spirit in the heavens to be a child of God, by virtue of the relations always existing in the Godhead, God is, and from eternity has been, "the Father" with a true fatherly nature of love.

Speaking only from the standpoint of the Fatherhood, with no thought of attempting in this statement to exhaust the Divine motives, man was created to satisfy God's desire for sons. Dr. Fairbairn beautifully brings out this thought of the necessity

God eternally  
the Father

His desire for  
sons



of the paternal and filial relations in the Godhead in order to the eternal existence of Divine love, and how "this eternal love explains the causal impulse, the beginning of the creation of God" (7: 410, 411). His character of Father led to the creation of men capable of satisfying His fatherly nature by becoming His sons.

Man originally was a son of God. There is no occasion for denying the original sonship of Adam, <sup>Man originally God's son</sup> except on the part of the extreme evolutionist (p. 156), and by rigid Calvinists who hold, with Candlish (32: 254, 113-116) and Wright (31: vi, vii, 11-25), that "sonship puts an end to probation." The great fact that vindicates the Divine dealing with our race, is that God started man right as a member of His own family (p. 152), so that man himself must cancel his filial relationship and go out, if he is ever to cease to be a son in the family of God (pp. 133-145).

When man by the choice of sin lost that

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moral and spiritual likeness of nature to God which is essential to the  
Sonship lost by sin constitution of sonship in the Divine family, he lost his sonship (p. 153). A son must be in the likeness of his father; a son of God must be a partaker of the Divine nature, of God's holiness. Thus was ended God's fatherly relationship to man, but not His fatherly instincts and desire for sons. Henceforth God and man were related as Father and son only in the thought and intention of the Divine love, not in fact.

God still longed for sons and the well-being of all His creatures, and, therefore, provided the sacrifice of His  
Provision for the restoration of sonship First-begotten Son that this purpose of Divine love might be realized. Here was a manifestation of the same spirit, which, as we have seen, was the causal impulse of creation. This is not because He is man's Father. Creation must precede God's relationship of Fatherhood to man. After sin entered, and

annulled that relationship, the provision of atonement must precede the paternal and filial relationship between God and man. It was not a paternal, but the Divine love that led to creation and then to redemption. God did not seek to save men because they were His sons, but rather because of His desire for the happiness of the creatures whose existence and happiness He had willed and because of His longing for sons and their fellowship (7: 464).

Since the Fall, the paternal and filial relationship between God and man has been grounded, not in crea-  
tion, but in the Atonement.

Sonship  
grounded in  
the Atonement

This is the vital point in question between so-called "Liberalism" and evangelical Christianity. Is man by nature or only by grace a son of God? Is sonship in the Divine family grounded in the physical creation or in redemption? Is it a natural or a gracious relationship? Do we receive

The issue  
between  
"Liberalism"  
and Orthodoxy

it from Adam or from Christ? Grant that it is a natural, universal, and inalienable relationship, and the Atonement vanishes as a work of supererogation (pp. 89, 118), and the field must be abandoned to "Liberalism."

But let us recall some facts previously established. Likeness of nature is essential between father and son. Sinful man partakes of the Satanic nature and can become partaker of the Divine nature, which is essential to sonship with God, only by the new birth, by being born of God. But this new birth is not inevitable, but conditioned on repentance and faith. And these are grounded in the Atonement, and so also is the sonship which they condition. "It is not the children of the flesh that are the children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed" (Rom. 9: 8; 4: 16). Therefore "God sent forth His Son, that He might *redeem* them that were under the law, *that we might receive the adop-*

*tion of sons*” (Gal. 4: 4, 5). The original, natural, and normal filial relation of man to God has been broken up by sin, and can be restored only as a gift of grace on the basis of a sufficient ground, which is the Atonement in Christ. “Not once in all the Scriptures,” says Bishop Stephen M. Merrill, “since Adam lost the image of God, and begat a son in his own likeness, has the relation of children in God’s family been attributed to creation, or to the natural birth, but always to redemption and adoption; or, which is the same thing, to the new birth, or spiritual regeneration. This is a crucial fact in this connection, and one of high significance in its bearing on all the lines of difference between the evangelical and the nonevangelical systems. It touches the vital point, because it implies the power in men to forfeit heirship, and all that heirship means. It assumes that sin affects the relations of eternity, as well as those of time. Men are so cut off from God

that eternal alienation ensues, unless redemption restores the vital union, and establishes the relation with God which will secure personal acceptance here, and everlasting life hereafter. In the light of this truth the reason for the costly sacrifice appears; nor is there any way of justifying it on any hypothesis that makes all men the children of God by being born after the flesh" (33: 76, 77).

The fatal weakness of the claim that we are sons of God by our very nature, may be shown by a comparison between Christ's sonship and ours. Jesus "comes that He may create in man the spirit of Christ's sonship natural, ours gracious the sonship He himself has by nature" (7: 307). But if that sonship is His by *nature*, it certainly is not ours by nature. The very reason of Christ's coming is that His nature and that of sinful man are so very distinct, that, in order to man's participation in His nature and relation of sonship to the Father, the nature of Christ must be be-

gotten in man by a new spiritual birth. The humanity that Christ embodied and which shared in His sonship was a sinless humanity, pure, harmless, and undefiled. Sinful humanity can be brought into His filial relationship to the Father only as in and through Him it is redeemed from sin. "The Father was in character and quality as was the Son" (7: 392), and we must be begotten in the image of Him who created us, in order to participate in that likeness and hence in that sonship. Dr. Fairbairn lays it down as a principle that the "creature is a being who corresponds in quality and kind to the causal instinct or creative impulse to which he owes his existence" (7: 417). This is true of the original creation and states clearly the excellent condition and relation with which man began his earthly career, but it does not take into account the condition which prevails as the result of sin, the evil that came by man's choice of the Devil instead of God, since which time man's very ex-

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istence is conditioned by and his possible sonship grounded in the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Man's original sonship was natural; but since he forfeited that by sin, if he again becomes a son, it must be by grace on the ground of Christ's sacrifice.

Dr. Fairbairn opposes the idea of sonship by grace, on the assumption apparently that such a sonship cannot be real in the constitution. "He who is no son by nature can never become a son by adoption" (7: 390, 391, Note). But he who is no son in any sense can become a son in the only true sense by birth. Adoption is not the only element in this process. True, that is the legal element; but the new birth is the life element and must not be ignored. Man originally was constituted in his very nature a son of God. This relationship he lost by his own responsible choice of sin. By grace his life was spared and the race continued in existence, but no longer "by nature" the children of God



but "the children of wrath." By grace the Atonement was provided and regeneration offered, so that the nature might be transformed, and a new filial nature and relationship begotten by the Spirit. Again man by his very nature and constitution is a real son of God, partaking of the very nature of his Father. But this nature is not received as the ordinary result of creation, but is a new nature graciously bestowed through the new birth on the ground of the Atonement. Sonship does not result from creation, but from a vital union with the crucified and glorified Christ.

Because of the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, all men at birth come into the family of God. Adam's children were begotten, not in the Divine image in a sense sufficient to constitute them the children of God, but in the image of their fallen father. They were born in a state of moral ruin, generally termed native depravity. Dur-

Gracious  
sonship of  
infants

ing the years of irresponsibility this involved no guilt, but it did necessitate gracious interference in their behalf on the part of God, if they were to sustain a filial relation and be in a saved condition. That God did so interfere and graciously own all such in infancy as His children, the teaching of Jesus in regard to childhood has put forever beyond question. If this was not on the basis of the Atonement, then there is a filial relation to God among men and the salvation of a class—those dying in infancy—that have no relation to Christ's redemption, and they will never be able to ascribe their condition to His sacrificial death. No one who believes in the Atonement at all, will hold such an untenable position. But if these benefits accrue to the children because of redemption, they must be unconditional benefits; for the class benefited cannot meet conditions. Therefore we say, because of the unconditional benefits of the Atonement, man at birth is placed in the

relationship of a son to God (Rom. 5: 18). By grace, on the ground of love's redeeming work, all men begin life in the same relation to God that the original man, before sin, sustained by nature.

As our first parents by sin lost their moral likeness to God and hence also their sonship, so, upon arriving at years of accountability, if Gracious sonship lost by sin. man chooses sin, he thereby loses his gracious relationship, becomes a partaker of the Satanic nature and a child of the Devil. Below even the inner life, which is the inspiration of the outer life, as Dr. Miley expressed it in his class-room lectures, "there is the nature with its tendencies, metaphysical or unphenomenal, but none the less real for thought. There is a real difference of subjective tendency as between the lion and the lamb. There is such a difference in the natures of men whose lives are morally opposite." These morally opposite natures cannot have been begotten spiritually by the same fa-

ther. One is from below and the other from above.

If the entire argument up to this point has not been a delusion, the proposition

Sonship  
restored by  
adoption and  
the new birth

that, to become a son of God, sinful man must be adopted and born of God, is firmly

established. He who, belonging to one family, would become a son of another, must be adopted out of the one family into the other. For the sinner to become a child of God, he must be adopted out of the family of Satan into the family of God; and in order for him to be a real and not a merely legal son, he must be born again, born of God. "That which is begotten must have the nature of that of which it is begotten" (26: 216). "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." He whose "heart is deceitful above all things, and exceedingly corrupt" evidently has been "born of the flesh," begotten by the Deceiver and

Wicked One. Nature results from birth. Moral likeness to God, the filial nature, results from being born of God. Children are not made, but born. Those who are born of God are called children of God and are easily distinguished from children of the Devil (1 Jno. 3: 10).

Sonship not only is begotten, but is witnessed to also by the Holy Spirit. That there is no sonship for the sinner in the Divine family, Witness of the Spirit to sonship except first he shall be born of the Spirit, seems to have been made clear. When we thus become children of God, He sends forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying "Abba, Father," and bearing witness that we are children and heirs of God.

This sonship is the gracious and glorious privilege of all. "The perfect design of Christianity, and that which is, so to speak, its peculiarity, is to bring God near to man as a Father, to restore His fatherly rela-

The privilege of all

## 258 Sonship, the Privilege of All

tion to mankind" (36: 116). But the way to realize this is not to begin by denying that sin has broken that relationship and that therefore it does not need to be restored. Christianity perfectly meets the case, because it portrays man's real condition and need as an "alien" and "foreigner," and provides and shows the way by which man through the new birth may be restored to his forfeited sonship and know himself by the witness of the Spirit a child of God. "The soul of personal Christianity is the adoption which makes us as regenerate the sons of God. . . . The new life with its privileges to which He (the Son) introduces us in His Gospel is the virtue of His Divine Sonship in us: His eternal filial life poured afresh into our human nature" (36: 116). It is the high privilege of man in the spiritual and moral realm to choose his own father; every man may be well born, born of God, if he will, and thus come to share truly in the conception of

God as a Father, which is the characteristic conception of Jesus, in whom first it has been revealed clearly that all men may become and be forever the children of God. *The true doctrine of the Fatherhood of God is, then, that Christ by His Atonement has made that Fatherhood universally possible, but not thereby actually universal.*

#### B.—CORRELATED WITH OTHER FACTS

This doctrine of a moral and spiritual, and therefore conditional, but also universally available Fatherhood and sonship, fits in perfectly with all the facts of revelation and experience. We mention a few, in connection with which the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God is most generally presented.

It is claimed that sin becomes an awful thing in the light of the universal Fatherhood (2: 183). But it be-  
comes a more awful thing in  
the light of the true doctrine of the Fa-

Sin

therhood. It not only breaks up the Divine family and resists God's desire of filial love (1: 197), but it cancels the relation of sonship once graciously bestowed and actually makes children of the Evil One out of those who once were, who ought to be, and who might become sons of God. The true doctrine does not allow of saying of sinful, selfish, fighting men, "The essence of our being is love" (2: 182), nor, with Maurice and Robertson as quoted by Dr. Crawford, "that it is lawful to tell men that they are justified before God, and are sons of God in the only begotten Son," that "the sin of man consists in this denial of his filial relationship to God," "that man, as man, is God's child," and that faith "only appropriates that which is a fact already" (18: 184, 185). No, the tendency of the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood is to make light of sin; indeed, there is no logical place for it at all, until sin has been gotten rid of entirely. The Jews, while rejecting



Christ, claimed God as their Father and were rebuked severely. The sinner who is ready to repent, confess, and cry for mercy and pardon, has no thought that he is a child of God, but thinks of himself only as the Bible teaches him to think, that he is a child of wrath, an heir of hell.

The doctrine of the universal Fatherhood is made use of as a basis for the teaching that "the Gospel

Salvation

was good news to men, not of something which was coming to them, but of their actual state, of that state which belongs to them, but which they do not recognize," because "mankind are His sons, not by adoption or grace, but by nature," and "no atonement can be needed to bring nigh those who never can be far off."<sup>1</sup> This is the logical position of those who insist that all men are always sons of God and who are affected by the tendency to question the reality of native depravity. But if there is truth in Scrip-

<sup>1</sup> Maurice quoted in 31: 76.

ture, salvation is vastly more than a discovery of an existing right relationship of man to God. Indeed, it is not that at all, but must be preceded by a discovery of the very opposite. Salvation is a radical rectifying of a wrong and disordered nature and relationship.

It is thought by some that we have a more sure hope of salvation on the assumption that in God's seeking the lost, we have a Father seeking for His wandering children. But in the perfection of the Divine Being who "is love," and in His fatherly instincts that led to creation and redemption in order that He might have sons, and in the object lesson of Calvary, which is a fact regardless of any theory or doctrine of the Fatherhood, we have the firmest foundation for the belief that God has "loved too deeply to surrender the lost," except after the last resource of the Infinite has been exhausted in the effort to bring all men into His family and eternal inheritance. The real hope of the

sinner, whose sin has made him a veritable child of the Devil, is not in any fictitious sonship that is compatible with a state of moral ruin and alienation from God, but in the revealed truth that the alien in heart and life may be transformed, by a spiritual birth and cleansing, into an actual son and heir by the God of love and holiness who is longing to be his Father and to have him for His son.

It has been shown that in any consistent scheme holding the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood, there is no place for punishment, Punishment but only for fatherly discipline. But if language can be depended upon to express thought and if the Scriptures teach anything, punishment is a revealed certainty of eternal duration. No one more than those who hold the conditional, but universally available Fatherhood and sonship, can emphasize the "immutable and universal" love of God for sinners. But must not this be within the limits of pro-

bation? Does God love the Devil? or does He love man after man by his final rejection of God and choice of sin becomes a devil? The only thinkable conclusion gives a negative answer to these questions. In every other direction is only endless confusion. "To accept the loss (of the sinner) were to cancel the love," it is said. But the time must come when that loss is accepted and the love canceled. The only thinkable alternative is a future—probably an eternal—probation, contrary to our only revealed knowledge and based only on man's incompetent conjecture.

What more emphatic exhibition of the supreme enmity of God to sin and His loving purpose of salvation could be conceived than His infinite sacrifice to end sin by expelling it from the repentant sinner, accompanied with the eternal shutting out of the finally incorrigible from the presence of God and all holy angels? Surely this is less a defeat on the part of

God than for Him to engage in what He must know to be an eternally hopeless conflict, which, no matter what is said, must leave sin to be the victor. But God tells us that He will not always strive, and that there is a sin and a class of sinners that can be forgiven never, neither in this world nor in that which is to come.<sup>1</sup> The attempt that God has made for the restoration of the sinner by His free salvation, even if that effort ends at a time which is right in the view of the all-wise and loving One, must be such a manifestation of God "that all the universe will feel as if there had come to it a vision of love that made it taste the ecstasy and beatitude of the Divine" (7: 468). The doctrine of the universal Fatherhood excludes the Scriptural fact of punishment. The view of the Fatherhood, as made by the Atonement universally possible but not actually and inevitably universal, is in perfect harmony with the Biblical teaching of a

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 12: 31, 32; 1 Jno. 5: 16.

moral government of God based on rewards and punishments, and a distinct paternal government, with the subjects of which only does God deal as with sons.

No one, more than the writer, would emphasize the blessed truth that the conception of God as our Father brightens the hope of immortality, adds reality, delight, and zest to the exercise of prayer, and brings solid comfort to the suffering and sorrowful. He who knows God as his everlasting Father expects most assuredly and without question to be His everlasting child. To him who knows himself a son, prayer is sweet communion with the loving Father. And in the midst of disappointments, blasted hopes, an apparently dark future, bodily pain, nervous anxiety, soul agony, and especially when death enters the home and forces from our embrace those who are most dearly loved, he alone knows how to be comforted who has learned to "interpret God by His Fa-

Sorrow,  
prayer, and  
immortality

therhood," to look up into the face of the Eternal and call Him Father. But all this is without significance to him who has not become an actual child by the new birth and renewal of the Holy Spirit. While sin remains and the soul is a stranger to God and an alien from the covenant of promise, not even the supposition that all men are the sons of God can prevent suffering and sorrow or give real comfort therein. The notion of the universal Fatherhood throws no additional light upon the problem of the world's darkness and agony. That darkness is too dense to be dispelled by any imaginary sun. It will give way only before those rays which cause the heart to "feel strangely warmed," as the power and right are given to become children of God and we receive the Spirit of adoption that enables us to cry, "Abba, Father," and the Spirit bears witness that we are children, and if children, then heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, and thus we come to

## 268 Brotherhood, the Supreme Social Need

know that "all things work together for good to" us because we love and know God as our Father. The true doctrine of the Fatherhood of God fits in just as perfectly with all other facts of experience and revelation.

### C.—THE ONLY BASIS OF A BROTHERLY BROTHERHOOD AND A TRUE SOCIOLOGY

The supreme sociological need of the world is a truly brotherly brotherhood, a brotherhood in which selfish strife shall cease and each shall seek the other's good.

There is no sufficient basis for such a brotherhood in the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood. There is no basis in the universal Fatherhood a universal brotherhood, a unity and solidarity of the race, a likeness between all men. By nature and universally we are brothers, not because God made us, but because "He made of *one* every nation of men" (Acts 17: 26) by



descent from a common earthly father, and because He has made us interdependent in all our relations. But this brotherhood which is ours by nature is not sufficient to exterminate unbrotherliness. The natural son or the natural brother will build his own fortune on the ruin of his natural father or brother. Such a brotherhood (and the universal Fatherhood has no basis for anything better) "would leave the heart of man as barren as" socialism leaves it. Any brotherhood which is based on the doctrine of a Fatherhood which teaches that all men are "equally" the children of God because "there is, and can be, no difference in the essential nature of various groups of men" (2: 114, 115), though, with the French Revolutionists, it adopts the motto, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," will never recognize the rights of man except in theory. All schemes of social regeneration and theories and doctrines of brotherhood are fundamentally defi-

## 270 Only Basis in the True Fatherhood

cient, which do not recognize that the reason why there is a burning social problem, is that the nature of man is wrong, that there is a radical "difference in the essential nature of" the two groups of men known in Scripture as "the children of the Devil" and "the sons of God," and that this difference of nature arises from a difference between the father of the one class and the Father of the other. Unbrotherliness will not cease till the unbrotherly spirit, arising out of a disordered and essentially depraved nature, has been removed by the Divine begetting of a new spirit, a new nature.

Hence, for the real brotherhood, after which the wise and farseeing social reformer is striving, the only  
**Only basis  
in the true  
Fatherhood** sufficient basis is in the true doctrine of the Fatherhood. The fundamental inquiry of Sociology is, "How may brotherhood be made a reality?" When rightly understood, this question does not refer to a natural brotherhood;

for that always has been a reality. A natural brotherhood that leaves man with a Satanic nature, which leads him to bite and devour his natural brother and keeps the human race involved in bickering and warfare and mutual commercial and industrial slaughter, will not solve earth's social problems. A new brotherhood is a necessity, a brotherhood which is the outgrowth, not of an imaginary universal Fatherhood that calls men the sons of God by physical relationship while possessed of the nature of the Evil One, but of a real moral and spiritual relation of sonship that involves a participation in the moral character of the Divine Father. When men become children of God, the bond which unites them to the Father will join the children in the real brotherhood, and that bond is a common nature of moral purity and love with the heavenly Father. In such a brotherhood, and in such only, will the wrongs, which now afflict society, become an impossibility.

## 272 The Weakness of Many Reforms

This bond of brotherly love can become a reality only in and through Christ, who alone has taught and exemplified the true brotherly spirit, whose real followers are known as "brethren,"<sup>1</sup> taught to manifest brotherly love,<sup>2</sup> and who become true brothers to one another only by becoming the brothers of Jesus Christ, through partaking of His filial character and hence of His filial relationship by being born into the family where He is the First-begotten Son and Elder Brother.

The fundamental weakness of many social crusaders to-day is this, that they assume the sufficiency of natural brotherhood as a basis of reform, and, in so far as they recognize God at all, they teach that He is the universal Father, and thus ignore the absolute necessity of a transformation in man's nature as radical as birth in order to get into the family of

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 23: 8; Eph. 6: 10, 21-23; Philemon 7, 16, 20; Phil. 1: 12, 14; 3: 1, 13, 17; 4: 1, 8, 21; Col. 1: 2; 4: 15; Heb. 3: 1, 12; 10: 19; 13: 22, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. 6: 10; 10: 24, 33, 34; 12: 14; 13: 3, 16; Rom. 14: 13, 21; John 13: 34; 15: 12.

God and establish a brotherhood which by its very nature will exterminate the evils that have given occasion for the crusade. This fatal error postpones the day of the world's redemption and hence also of its social regeneration. For "the Ideal Republic, the New Atlantis, Utopia, the Golden Age" to "take form among men," something more will be necessary than simply for all to learn "to *think* of the Infinite as Father and of humanity as a brotherhood" (2: 135)—men will have to become children of God, possessed of the Divine nature and hence of a brotherly spirit that will lift them above the natural brotherhood in sin and need and selfish nature into the brotherhood of the Divine family where love holds universal sway because it has been begotten in every child by the Father who is love (1 Jno. 5: 1, 2). And just as the Divine love embraces and determines the Divine treatment of those who will not allow a manifestation of paternal love toward

## 274 Results of This Coming Brotherhood

them because they will not be sons, so also the Christian's treatment of those toward whom he is not allowed to exercise brotherly love (2 Jno. 10, 11), will be governed by the law of the family in which he has become a child, the law of love (Matt. 5: 44, 46). Men can never be united except in and through Christ (John 17: 21, 23). This can be accomplished only by those who are not sons becoming sons by being born of God. Hence the moral, spiritual, conditional, and universally available Fatherhood is the only basis of the ideal sociological brotherhood.

To think of the inevitable results of the bringing in of such a brotherhood, is an  
Results of this coming brotherhood inspiration to every true heart. In proportion as men become children of God, adopted out of the family whose father is Satan, born into the family whose Father is the Lord, formed into a brotherhood about the Person of Jesus, and therefore accepting as

the law of their life the commandment of Christ, "Love one another as I have loved you"—in proportion as the natural brotherhood of man based on creation, is transformed into the Christian brotherhood grounded only in redemption, will there be an annihilation of the selfishness which is now the basis of our social order, and the ushering in of a reign of universal brotherliness under which regenerated human nature will be guided by the law, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." This will maintain all men in brotherly relations by putting into force everywhere the principles of the social laws of the Old and New Testaments, laws that pronounce woe upon the unjust accumulation of personal wealth to the pauperizing of one's neighbors (Is. 5: 8), laws that require a recognition of the needs of our brother (Lev. 23: 22), laws that demand universal righteousness, and obedience to which would make it forever impossible that the righteous should be forsaken or

## 276 Results of This Coming Brotherhood

his seed be seen begging bread. In that day distrust and discord will have ceased, pride, jealousy, and hate will no longer be infused into the heart, domestic life, neighborhood intercourse, or the policy of nations, because the dominant question in society, business, and the affairs of State will not be, What will increase the material wealth of a few? but rather, What will promote the general and highest welfare of all? Each will seek his own welfare in the welfare of others, or rather lose sight of self in the effort to save others.

And that day is coming. It is not here, it is yet to come. Men are still trusting in a natural brotherhood, a natural sonship, a universal Fatherhood. Hope is not in these things. There is no help in confounding existing facts with ideals and greatly desired ends. The first requisite to the cure of a malady, is to recognize the true nature of the disease. The trouble with this world is that its heart is



wrong, its nature is Satanic and not Divine, it is peopled to too great an extent with the seed of the serpent who have become such by their own choice of sin. The only remedy is the begetting and increase, till it shall cover the earth, of a new race: namely, the sons of God, who can become such only by their own personal choice of God to be their Father, through faith in Jesus Christ their Savior. And that day is coming. Christ has been manifested to destroy the works of the Devil, and in spite of the sin and selfishness now prevailing,

“For a’ that, and a’ that,  
It’s coming yet, for a’ that;  
That man to man, the world o’er,  
Shall brithers be for a’ that.”

#### D.—RELATION OF THE FATHERHOOD TO ETHICS AND EVANGELISM

The claim is made that the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood “offers the strongest of all motives for righteousness” (2: 188) and

Weakness of  
Universalism

“is the most telling, the most persuasive, the most saving that ever was preached to the children of men” (3: 90). If the latter claim were true, then the Universalist ought to be the strongest and largest Protestant Church in the world; for this is the fundamental doctrine of that organization. The extent to which the Universalists have failed to approach toward the spiritual or numerical leadership of Protestantism, may be taken as a measure in some degree of the distance which their fundamental doctrine comes from the truth. It has proved a dismal failure as a force in winning men to Christ, and the chief reason for its weakness in this particular is, that, in spite of its great apparent attractiveness, it is false and therefore without sweeping and permanent power for good. To teach men that they are children of God and therefore that all they need is to act as loyal children, is to lead them, even if it does this much, only to formal and outward conformity, in-

stead of to the inward spiritual transformation which is essential to make them actual children and heirs of God. The doctrine of the Fatherhood is a good one to impress upon children and to teach to regenerated adults; but to the sinner, who has forfeited his sonship by deliberate rebellion and sin, by rejecting God and giving allegiance to Satan, sonship in the Divine family can be taught without untold injury only as a relationship to be attained by leaving off his sins in righteousness and turning to the living God. The setting forth of repentance as the sufficient ground of forgiveness, encourages the sinner to continue in sin and to delay the day of his salvation; for on that doctrine, mere repentance at any time, in this world or any other, will change man's lost condition whenever he may choose, and so there is no need of haste.

“To the depraved and vicious, the self-centered and selfish, the doctrine that God is Father of all men gives a feeling of se-

curity and of license. It relieves them of . . . the sense of . . . the fear of God. Hearing this doctrine universally proclaimed, . . . bad men, impenitent men say within themselves, 'If this is true, if God is Father to all men, then we are as well off as others.' In spite of qualifications and distinctions and warnings, the doctrine that God is Father to all, means this to the average man of the world; and *if it is qualified and explained so as not to mean this, it means nothing, at least nothing that he cares for.* On the other hand, to the righteous, this doctrine has a tendency to cheapen the highest thing. If it be true, they are tempted to feel: 'If God is Father to all men, then we are no better off than others,' " and "imperceptibly, unconsciously, they yield to the inevitable tendency, lower their standard of self-denial, self-mastery, and sacrifice, and relax their zeal in the service of God and man" (20: 188, 189). In addition to this clear reasoning from Dr. Alexander, we

submit this testimony from Mr. Wilson concerning a present well-known fact: "It is worth our while to notice that where the 'new conception' is most earnestly advocated, Methodism is most thoroughly losing its power to induce men to make this unselfish surrender to the Lord Jesus" (28: 64).

For pure ethics and a successful evangelism, we must have a more substantial basis than the shifting sands of a theological fiction. Professor William Newton Clarke finds the "eternal foundation for human ethics" in the fact that "God is the ideal person," and hence "must be the ideal of goodness for all persons," that "the good is likeness to God," "God is the moral standard" (1: 203-206). Speaking only of those who are indeed the sons of God by the new birth, we would say with this distinguished author, "The character of the Father is the standard for the family. . . . Since I am of God's family, moral

A sure basis  
in the true  
Fatherhood

obligation is a part of my being, goodness is my birthright" (1: 206, 207). And with all the heart we would join him in this: "We desire to see the human sonship completed in every soul that God has made, through holy, loyal fellowship with the Father" (1: 215). But to say of all men in their sins that God is their Father, we have already found is to say that they are in the moral likeness of God; and this compels one of two conclusions, either that God, as the moral standard, is not worthy of being taken as the ideal, or that the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood is false and without value to ethics. For this class the proper statement is not, "Since I am a member of God's family," but rather, "Since by God's free grace I came into this world His child, but by my own choice of sin this gracious relationship was severed, and since through Christ I may yet become reinstated in the Divine family, moral obligation is a part of my being, goodness is my birthright."

This view gives added force to the ethical motive based on God's paternal relation; for it lays upon the sinner the awful guilt of outraging fatherly love to the extent of dissolving the sonship, presents the Cross as the ground even of the possible restoration of the filial standing, and warns us that a final refusal to accept the right and power to become children of God, will shut us out of the heritage involved in that relationship forever. Surely these considerations, in addition to what has been said on the relation of this doctrine to Universalism, salvation, and punishment, are sufficient to show the weakness of the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood as a force making for righteousness, and to prove its utter ineffectiveness as a motive by which to persuade men to an immediate surrender to Christ. The exhortation of the evangelist is, and still must be, for sinners to become "sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3: 26).

## 284 No Advantage in the False Doctrine

### E.—FATHERHOOD EXALTED AND HOPE INSPIRED

There is not a point of advantage in the false doctrine—there never is. If we stop short of the logical conclusion of Universalism, the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood affords us nothing more than “a figurative and euphonious way of describing creation and Providence” (7: 445). Sonship on such a basis is nothing better than a figure of speech, which succeeds only in putting a weapon into the hands of the enemy by using a phraseology which may be misunderstood and which is unscriptural. “To possess the characteristics of a father,” and “to sustain the relation of a father,” are very different things, and the distinction disposes at least of some of the natural grounds adduced for the universal Fatherhood. Something more is needed than the mere remission of and escape from deserved penalty, “which is all that mankind *naturally* care for.” And

No advantage  
in the false  
doctrine

short of the logical conclu-  
sion of Universalism, the



when the doctrine is qualified and explained to mean more than this, and to involve the crucifixion of the flesh and sinful lusts as the condition of "becoming His sons indeed" (1: 145), it has no more attraction to the sinful heart than the truly Scriptural doctrine.

The true teaching exalts the Fatherhood and inspires hope. It shows that the filial relation is the ideal toward which God would have humanity move. The purpose of Christ through Christianity is to restore that relationship wherever it had been forfeited. But there is no advantage to truth and morals in confounding this Divinely desired goal with existing facts, the universal moral government of God with His paternal government, which can be only partial as long as one rebel remains. The old and always new truth that God has sent to take the place of Calvinism, that, as Dr. Clarke confesses, "perhaps, has broken as many hearts as it

has nerved" (1: 190), was not this false conception of Fatherhood, but rather the Arminian's proclamation,

"The arms of love that compass me  
Would all mankind embrace."

This herald of a true universal hope does not hesitate gratefully to appropriate all that is true in Calvinism touching the Divine sovereignty, consistent with the conscious and Divinely revealed certainty of human freedom, and to add to this the true Scriptural conception of a conditional Fatherhood and sonship, and to lay upon all hearts the Divinely imposed responsibility of choosing whether to remain under the universal moral government of God with the certainty of final doom after probation, or of coming into the inner courts of the family circle where God dealeth with us as with sons (Heb. 12: 7, 8).

We have seen that the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood adds nothing to the

strength of the Divine love nor the certainty that infinite resources would be employed in providing for the salvation of all intelligent creatures whom God has made. Neither does it make it any more evident that "religion is obviously normal and necessary to mankind," that men are born in the kingdom and intended to "grow up in the family, and cannot properly grow up anywhere else," that "religion is a family matter," and that "spiritual sonship is only the fulfillment of God's creative ideal, expressed when He created man in His own likeness" (1: 149-151, 156). But how shall this family religion be realized? How shall we "awaken in men an exacting sense of obligation, and a blessed sense of privilege" (13: 192)? By telling them that in their sins they are sons of God, that sonship is of so little significance and honor that Judas and Nero are as truly and inalienably children of God as John and Paul (3: 22)? Shall we seek to inspire men to

strive for the privilege of sonship by pointing them to that human beast on the throne or in the gutter, the assassin with his dripping dagger or poisoned bullet, the outlaw in the cell or on the scaffold, and telling them that such are the sons of God? Or shall we tell men in the agony of being without God, without Christ, and without hope, that the Divine Fatherhood is so exalted and sonship in His family a relationship so holy, that only those who are cleansed by the blood and begotten in the very likeness of God and not of Satan can be God's children, that we are to know what sonship means by what we see of Jesus in His relations as a man to the Divine Father, and that while we are not to be partakers of the Godhead, of the Divinity, we must be partakers of the Divine nature, of the filial character of Jesus, in order to participate with Him in the filial relationship?

The doctrine of the Fatherhood certainly is one of the most precious truths

of revelation. But does it add anything to the preciousness of this doctrine, the glory of God, and the hope of a lost world, to say that all the vile children of men are also *by nature* the sons of God? Is not greater emphasis given to the preciousness and glory of this relationship, is not the Fatherhood exalted, and the sonship raised to a height that makes it more to be desired and appreciated, by holding firmly to the Scriptural conception, that only those who have the mind of Christ and are led by the Spirit of God are children of God, and that this can become a fact of experience only by grace through the vicarious sacrifice of the First-begotten Son? Of what value is a figurative sonship to us? "We want not merely One who, in His other relations, acts as far as possible a fatherly part toward us, but One who is *in fact* our Father" (32: 114). We want to belong to "a new race, as much above the sons of Adam as these

Fatherhood  
and sonship  
exalted

## 290 Fatherhood and Sonship Exalted

are above the ape and gorilla," a "new order" composed of "the sons of God," the Founder and first member of which is the second Adam. We must have a sonship which expresses life. All so-called natural sonship leaves the soul dead. "The sons of God have spiritual life; the sons of Adam are spiritually dead," and this is because they are not the sons of God. Dr. Steele beautifully expresses this difference which "is not external, but internal. The one feels the heart-throbs of a new life; the other lies pulseless in the sepulcher of spiritual death. The one is God-centered, gravitating upward, drawn by the magnetism of love; the other is self-centered, moving downward, with the accelerating velocity of depravity. The one throbs through all the mystery of his being with the pulses of a Divine life; the other is insensible to those spiritual truths which thrill the former with rapture unutterable. Though both obey the Decalogue and minister their

charities to the needy, the one acts with a single eye to the glory of God; the other is actuated by a highly refined selfishness. The obedience of the one is freedom; of the other, servility" (23: 12-16). We must have a sonship that involves an actual and not a fictitious likeness to the heavenly Father. The sons of Adam reflect his depraved image, the sons of God reflect the moral image of the Divine purity, they are partakers of the Divine nature, His workmanship, created in righteousness and holiness of truth. Sonship must be begotten, it cannot be made. "Jesus was begotten of the Holy Ghost; the sons of God are born of the Spirit. . . . Jesus had the certificate of His sonship in the repeated utterance of His Father, 'Thou art my well-beloved Son;' so does the child of God hear the attestation of his Divine adoption prompting the joyful shout, Abba, Father:

" 'The Spirit answers to the blood,  
And tells me I am born of God,' " (23: 21.)

## 292 Fatherhood and Sonship Exalted

This conception exalts the Divine Fatherhood, crowns sonship with a heavenly glory, presents it as a heritage worth the sacrifice of Calvary and the devoted consecration of man that it might be possessed, and holds out a hope as high as heaven, as deep as the gates to eternal despair, and as wide as the needs of a ruined but redeemed humanity.



## CONCLUSION

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It has been shown that the Old Testament knows nothing of a universal Divine Fatherhood, and that, in perfect harmony and consistency with the writers of the old dispensation, Christ and His Apostles teach a conditional moral and spiritual Fatherhood and sonship, that in the Divine family this sonship is by grace and not by nature, not from Adam but from Christ, not based on creation, but grounded in redemption, that Christ by His Atonement makes it universal in infancy, universally possible for all free intelligences, but not thereby actually universal for all classes regardless of their moral choice and nature.

The doctrine of  
the Bible

Also it has been made clear that the

## 294 A Doctrine Consistent and Sufficient

doctrine of the universal Fatherhood is  
Other theories  
groundless, but  
dangerous weak, in that it is based  
neither on Scripture nor in  
any necessity of reason, that it is incon-  
sistent with evangelical Christianity, in-  
volves horrible absurdities, is fraught  
with the gravest dangers because of its  
fundamental relation to unscriptural sys-  
tems of theology, and is therefore a most  
cruel and deceptive doctrine.

On the other hand, the true doctrine of  
a moral, spiritual, and conditional Father-  
A doctrine  
consistent and  
sufficient hood and sonship, is con-  
sistent with Scripture and  
reason, meets all the requirements of the  
case, fits in perfectly with all correlated  
facts and doctrines of experience and rev-  
elation, furnishes the only basis for the  
solution of earth's social problems, and  
presents a hope worth entertaining and  
bounded only by man's insanely wicked  
determination to choose Satan instead of  
God to be his father.

The conception of a universal paternal

and filial relationship between God and man, and the consequent view that the hour for the restoration of all wandering sons to the Father's home is surely coming, are so attractive to the Christian worker, that they sometimes come in almost overwhelming power and would force acceptance, if one were to lose sight of the stern realities of the situation, the revealed truth of God's Word, and the logic of reason, and give himself up to a contemplation of the prospects presented by him who through the ages has been saying, "Ye shall not surely die," but "ye shall be as God," and "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." But unfortunately many attractive hopes must be abandoned because they have no basis in truth. It is only the voice of an Arch-Deceiver, whose purpose seems to be most benevolent and whose presentations seem very plausible. What

The obligation  
not to deceive

could have been more plausible than the tempter's suggestion to the famished Man of sorrows, that He transform some stones into bread and refresh and reinvigorate His weakened body? Apparently it was a most benevolent heart that prompted such a thought. But the real design was to make a devil out of the Son of God and accomplish the eternal ruin of the whole lost race at one fell stroke by destroying their only Savior. It is folly for us to presume on a happy outcome for ourselves or others, for whom we are in part at least responsible. All teachers of religious truth are under the most sacred obligations not to deceive their hearers or readers by a presentation of hopes that will not stand the test of God's Word. We must rather go to the limit of our ability to help and guide all aright.

The time has been when men very generally thought of God as a stern, unbending, wrathful King and Judge. Now the pendulum

Our present  
task

is swinging to the opposite and equally dangerous extreme, to the view that He is unconditionally and inevitably the Father of all. For those who from the beginning have grasped the loving and merciful justice of God as well as His sovereign Lordship, and consistently have declared the equal hope, right, and power of every child of Adam's lost race to become a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ, there is absolutely no excuse for flying off to the new and false theology, which, where it is not a mere subterfuge of unbelief, is only a protest against a horrible position, which they never occupied, and which now is passing from the thought of the world so rapidly that we can afford, in solemn silence and without any further heat of passionate opposition, to witness its exit. Indeed, those who never have been caught in the meshes of these views, against which the "new theology" is in particular a protest, occupy a peculiarly responsible position,

## 298 Man's Need, to Know God as Father

and are under especial obligation to devote themselves to the present task of bringing back the pendulum of theological and popular thought to the normal, safe, and Scriptural view, which really exalts the doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood and emphasizes its preciousness.

To realize God as Father, is man's supreme need, which is only another way of

Man's need, to know God as Father      saying that man needs most of all to be renewed in the

moral likeness of God, that likeness which is necessary to sonship. But to tell an unregenerate man that God is his Father, is to offer him a stone, who needs bread. What he needs is to know that he may be born again, that God so longs to be his Father that He has given His only begotten Son, that man may have the right and power to become indeed a child and heir of God. A piece of marble under the chisel of the sculptor may become a masterpiece of statuary, but it is not in any sense already such a work of art. So

also the man, whose sins have made him a child of Satan, may become by the birth of the Spirit a child of God. And nothing short of this is the design and desire of infinite love for all the children of men, a consummation which nothing but man's free choice of sin can prevent.

It bodes no good to the cause of pure religion, that there is so great readiness to make little of the distinction between the two classes,

*The most cruel deception*

which the Scriptures designate by such emphatic and pregnant terms. It needs to be remembered that it is a great thing to be a son of God, and that a wonderful inheritance is involved in this relationship. With exceeding care we ought to guard against subjecting ourselves to the terrible rebuke which Jesus gave to the Jews just because they claimed, while not believing in Him, to be children of God. We must not deceive those, who are looking to us for the truth, by giving them a false basis of hope, in leading them to be-

lieve that they are children of God while yet in their sins, until it is too late for them to be adopted out of the family of the Arch-Deceiver into that of the Father in heaven. "Of all deceptions, this is the most miserable and disappointing."

But to a race of lost and sin-ruined men, groping in the darkness of an other-  
The hope that is  
 an anchor of  
 the soul wise rayless night, we must present the hope that is an anchor of the soul, "both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." To this end, tell them not of a merely physical and natural sonship that means nothing, or else too much, and hence gives only a false hope, but tell them of a spiritual relationship that makes them in the likeness of God, therefore His children and also heirs. Tell them not that sonship is already a universal fact and that their only need is to recognize their Father; but tell them that the gracious privilege of becoming a son of God reaches as far as Christ's sacrifi-



cial death, to every soul that sin has blighted. Build no air-castles of spiritual expectation on the sandy foundation of a natural sonship; but tell men that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ calls them to the highest privileges, including the inspiration of the open door to the Father's eternal and heavenly home and family circle. Tell them of the awful power and ruin of sin, that it may even break the filial relationship between man and God, and transform a possible son of heaven into a child of hell. But tell them also that the heart of the Eternal is a fatherly heart of Divine love that has gone to the very depth of a Father's sorrow and a Brother's sacrifice, that His desire for sons and their highest well-being might be realized, and that all the children of men, who will, might enter into the most blessed relationship of earth or heaven, in which all the sons of the redeemed family of earth might look up to God and say, "Our Father," in a filial confidence

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inspired by the experience of the new birth and the witness of the Holy Spirit to the fact of a real sonship grounded in love's redeeming work, a sonship therefore which is the supreme privilege of all the children of men; for no child of God, while he makes it his chief concern to be a child, will ever perish, but every one has been *begotten* "unto a living hope, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" for all the children of God (1 Pet. 1: 3, 4). Yes, tell them that merely to be a child of God, is the highest proof of the Father's love: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." Evidently those who do not know the children of God, because they do not know the Son of God, are not themselves children of God. And merely to be a child of God, is the

## The Assurance of What We Shall Be 303

great assurance of what we shall be: "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know [we know it as children of God] that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is" (1 Jno. 3: 1, 2).



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